Media Personality and Fan Community:

A Study in Modern Communication and Culture

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Abstract

This study examines the relations between media personalities and their audiences. Its broad interest is with the implications for contemporary social experience of the fact that modern communication and culture involve mediated interaction. Its focus is on broadcasting's use of personality presenters to interact with viewers and listeners and on audiences' experiences of this. This thesis explains that broadcasting has developed a personality system to relate to audiences and discusses the characteristics of this system. It considers the importance of genre in determining the type of presenter used and the significance of their personality. It is argued that an awareness of the construction of personae has undermined broadcasting's traditional personality system where sincerity is crucial. The fact that nowadays professional personalities operate as commodities in a competitive marketplace is highlighted and the role played by management companies in their careers is explored. This research project provides a case study of the media personality Phillip Schofield. His role as a presenter and his place within popular culture are elaborated. His persona is examined in detail and shown to be consistent with the discourses of broadcasting's personality system. This study proceeds to investigate the consumption of the personality system. It reviews the existing literature on para-social interaction and the mediated relationships of intimacy at a distance that develop between presenters and their audiences. It contributes to this knowledge by presenting the findings from qualitative research into viewers' relationships with a media personality. This empirical study involved conducting in-depth interviews with four of Phillip Schofield's fans and spending time with the fan community these interviewees belong to. The formation of this group is outlined and the fact that sociability is an important aspect of fandom is stressed. Concentrating on the subjects' responses to Schofield, this research demonstrates that one form of fandom is rooted in the intensive cultivation of a para-social relationship.

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This thesis is an examination of the relations between the media and audiences in conditions of late modernity. Its focus is on broadcasting's use of personality presenters to interact with viewers and listeners and on audience members' experiences of this. More specifically, this is a study of the construction and consumption of a media personality. The following research project provides a case study of a media persona and a qualitative account of fans' relationships with him.

Theoretical Framework

The study's starting point is the recognition that modern culture and communication are both "situated" and "mediated", and its broad interest is with the implications of this fact for contemporary social experience.

Sociologist John Thompson (1995) has as his motivation a wish to understand modernity and to do so, he says, we must give a central role to the development of communication media and their impact (p.3). Crucially he recognises that, "the use of communication media involves the creation of new forms of action and interaction in the social world, new kinds of social relationship and new ways of relating to others and to oneself" (p.4). Thompson considers how the development of communication media has affected patterns of social interaction and how these transformations have had implications for social life from the late fifteenth century on. He points out that they have given rise to *new* forms of interaction and *new* kinds of social relationships which differ from traditional interactions and relationships because of the "complex reordering

of patterns of human interaction across space and time" (p.82). Quite simply, communication media enable individuals to interact with each other even though they do not share a common spatial-temporal setting. The new forms of interaction and new kinds of relationships created are extended in space and possibly also in time; thus the use of communication media transforms the spatial and temporal organisation of social life.

Thompson finds it helpful to distinguish three types of interaction and he analyses their main characteristics to differentiate between them (p.82). He begins with the social interaction of a face-to-face nature that has prevailed for most of human history. Face-to-face interaction, a conversation between friends for example, takes place in a context of co-presence where participants share a common spatial-temporal reference system. Generally involving a two-way flow of communication, it is dialogical interaction and, furthermore, participants employ a multiplicity of symbolic cues to convey and interpret their messages. Thompson contrasts this with mediated interaction (p.83). Here he has in mind forms of interaction such as letter writing and telephone conversations where the use of a technical medium (paper, electrical wires) stretches the interaction across space and time. The participants in this sort of interaction are, therefore, located in contexts which are spatially and/or temporally separate. Mediated interaction involves a narrowing of symbolic cues but, like face-to-face interaction, it is dialogical and is oriented towards specific others.

Thompson uses the term "mediated quasi-interaction" to refer to the new kind of interactive situation created and the social relations established by the mass media (books, newspapers, radio, television, etc.). Like mediated interaction, mediated quasi-

interaction involves extended availability in space and/or time and, likewise, a certain narrowing of the range of symbolic cues. However mediated quasi-interaction differs from both forms of interaction previously outlined in two key respects. Firstly, unlike face-to-face and mediated interaction where the participants are oriented towards specific others, in the case of mediated quasi-interaction the communication is produced for an indefinite range of potential recipients. Secondly, mediated quasi-interaction is monological as the flow of communication is predominantly one-way. It is for these reasons that Thompson believes this third type of interaction is best regarded as a quasi-interaction. It does not, he points out, "have the degree of reciprocity and interpersonal specificity" of face-to-face or mediated forms of interaction (p.84). Yet, he is quick to stress, it is a form of interaction where bonds of friendship, affection, and loyalty can be formed nonetheless.

Social life in the modern world is increasingly made up of forms of interaction which are mediated. Thompson says that over the course of the last 500 years:

> face-to-face interaction has been increasingly supplemented by forms of mediated interaction and quasi-interaction. To an ever increasing extent, the exchange of information and symbolic content in the social world takes place in contexts of mediated interaction and quasi-interaction, rather than in contexts of face-to-face interaction between individuals who share a common locale. (p.87)

This is not to say, as Thompson goes on to point out, that the historical rise and growing importance of mediated forms of interaction has been detrimental to face-to-face interaction. Rather it makes sense to think of an individual experiencing the "interaction mix" of social life (ibid.). For most individuals, participation in mediated quasi-interaction is one among many aspects of everyday social activity in the modern

world (p.218). This concept of an "interaction mix" also helps remind us that interactional situations themselves have a hybrid character (p.85): in other words, one situation may involve a mixture of different forms of interaction.

The central concern of this study is the question with which Shaun Moores (1995a) begins his article entitled "Media, Modernity, and Lived Experience". He asks, "What difference have the media made to our experience of daily life in the modern world?" (p.5). Here this question is posed in relation to modern interactions and relationships, some of which are largely mediated. Moores sees the "complex relationship between media technologies and time-space transformations" as "the most fundamental issue for investigations of mediated social experience" (ibid.).

Moores concentrates on some work by the sociologist Anthony Giddens, believing that, although Giddens makes little reference to the media, he writes about modernity in a way which is appropriate to considerations of the question above. According to Moores, Giddens provides a "valuable analytical framework within which to consider communicative styles and processes" (p.5). Fundamentally Giddens is concerned with understanding how it feels to live day-to-day life in late modern society and central to his discussion of the experience of modernity is an argument about shifts in the organisation of time, space, and place. The basis of this argument is that time and space have been separated. Giddens refers to this process as "time-space distanciation" and talks about the "disembedding" of social systems involved (Moores, 1995a, p.6). Moores explains his assertion that in modern societies human relations have been "lifted" out of situated locales and "stretched" across both distance and time. Our social life is no longer necessarily dominated by "presence" in a physical setting as it was in

pre-modern societies. Our interactions are no longer largely confined to those of a face-to-face nature in a shared bounded locale as they once were, but may take place with distant, "absent" others. Moores explains that, "At the heart of time-space distanciation lies a complex reordering of the conditions of presence and absence" (p.7).

Of course communication technologies are of great significance in the "mediation of experience" (p.9). Interactions are regularly mediated by technologies such as telephones, computers, and also radio and television. As Moores stresses, forms of mass communication are pivotal to the time-space distanciation process. Through its constant transcending of time and space, the media is disembedding social relations and communicative interactions: geographically dispersed audiences are absent from media producers.

Moores (1995b) explains that the disembedding process involves a secondary and complementary process of "re-embedding" social activity. Giddens' concept of re-embedding refers to a "recasting of disembedded social relations so as to pin them down (however partially or transitorily) to local conditions of time and place" (Moores, 1995a, p.12). This is achieved through "facework" encounters: those moments when trust, reassurance, or even familiarity are incorporated into the otherwise impersonal, distanciated relationships between people and the institutions or abstract systems of modernity. The human representatives of abstract systems/institutions are involved in these "facework commitments" (1995b, p.332). The example of the reassurance the cabin crew provides for passengers during an aeroplane flight is given. The whole process of disembedding and re-embedding, especially its making impersonal

relationships more personal, has implications for notions of familiarity and estrangement (1995a, p.8).

Moores applies Giddens' ideas to the study of media experience. Having disembedded social relations, broadcasting institutions re-embed them through facework interactions. These facework interactions involve simulating situations of co-presence (p.12). This leads Moores into a discussion about the types of mediated facework developed by broadcasting to suit an intimate domestic site of consumption. He cites Scannell's (1989) work on broadcasting's "communicative ethos": the emergence of relaxed and informal modes of address, the use of styles of communication which are ordinary and familiar and, characteristic of private inter-personal interactions, are appropriate to the home environment (p.13). Moores claims that Langer's (1981) theory of television's "personality system" links up well with Giddens' notion of re-embedding (ibid.). It is television presenters who, as personalities, carry out the facework which is designed to establish a relationship of intimacy with distant, unknown viewers. They perform the re-embedding process. Moores (1995b) says, "Television presenters routinely employ styles of facework and forms of talk which are explicitly designed to 'personalize' communications with absent audiences in circumstances of time-space distanciation" (p.334).

Moores outlines Horton and Wohl's (1956) theory of para-social interaction to illustrate how broadcasters engage absent audiences in para-social relationships and refers to the argument made by Meyrowitz (1985) to make the point that this experience has changed the nature of "stranger" and "friend". He quotes Meyrowitz as claiming, "The evolution of media has begun to cloud the differences between stranger and friend and to weaken

the distinction between people who are 'here' and people who are 'somewhere else'" (1995a, p.13). Moores himself considers the genre of broadcast news. News tells us troubling stories of public happenings, but this is brought to us by the familiar figure of the newsreader: a "predictable, reassuring presence in our living rooms who seeks to cultivate 'trust relations' of a kind" (ibid.).[1]

Aims of the Study

Adopting the framework outlined above, this study examines the "facework encounters" between radio and television presenters and their listeners and viewers. It focuses on broadcasting's "personality system", looking in particular at how it creates a sense of familiarity and the ways in which it encourages audiences to enter into mediated relationships of "intimacy at a distance". This research project provides a detailed case study of a media personality. It also considers audience responses to the personality system: investigating subjects' experiences of "para-social interaction" with the media personality and demonstrating how this forms one part of the "interaction mix" of their relationship with him.

Studies of Fandom

This study involves audience members who have formed intensified relationships with a media personality. In that respect these research subjects belong to a particular category of the audience and may be described as fans. Their committed attachment results in certain activities usually associated with being a fan. Here in the introduction, therefore,

approaches to the study of fandom will be briefly outlined, beginning with a discussion of theories of fandom and moving on to some methodological issues.

Recent years have seen the emergence of the study of fans within Media and Cultural Studies. According to Martin Barker (1993, p.669), as a result of the realisation that popular culture had previously been neglected and the subsequent shift towards taking the popular more seriously, this development of fan studies was inevitable. Essays on fandom such as those in the collection of theoretical and empirical work edited by Lisa Lewis (1992) in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media* are representative of current thinking in this area. Fan research mainly emerged, therefore, from debates about taste and "value" in the domain of popular culture and from a perspective based on the premise of audience activity.

In her esssay "Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization", Joli Jenson (1992) argues that a pejorative view of fans has developed as a result of the elitism that has characterised approaches to popular culture and she contrasts the positive way in which aficionados of high culture are thought about with the stereotypically negative images of fans. She claims that fandom has traditionally been seen as a negative symptom of modern life and that the concept of the fan involves images of social and psychological pathology. She advocates a non-elitist approach which aims to better understand fans and calls for inquiry which can and should she says, "illuminate the experiences of others *in their own terms*" (p.26). Lewis (1992) too claims that fans have rarely been taken seriously as research subjects and argues for fandom as a coherent and important area for critical inquiry.[2]

John Fiske (1989a, 1989b) and Henry Jenkins (1992)[3], who both also contribute to the book edited by Lewis (1992), are committed to a positive interpretation of fandom and their research of fan communities recognises fans as productive and creative audience members. Their "populist" perspective, which highlights and stresses the positive aspects of fandom, can be regarded as taking the view that if audience members are active then it follows that fans are the most active of all. As noted by Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst (1998, p.121) in their review of the literature on fandom, many such studies have been concerned with the way in which fans are active in response to dominant forms of mass media and regard their activities as representing a form of resistance to ideological texts. It is suggested that ideological messages are overcome and transformed into new meanings by fans.

Fan studies, such as the work described above, have offered valuable insight into the experiences of a group who have rarely been taken seriously or treated sympathetically. However, as the issue at stake is the "rehabilitation" of fans, Barker (1993, p.670) accuses cultural studies of wanting to "heroize" them. He is critical of Fiske for whom he claims being a fan "becomes almost a sufficient guarantee of 'popular collective opposition'" (p.671). Indeed, those who seek to re-evaluate the position of subordinated groups such as fans can, according to Moores (1993), run the risk of celebrating popular experiences uncritically. He criticises Fiske for "an overly optimistic and rather romantic perception of everyday life in the postmodern world" (p.103). McGuigan too challenges what he calls "an uncritical populist drift in the study of popular culture" (Storey, 1993, p.182). Furthermore, conceptualising fans as producers of meaning who transform the texts that the dominant media offer them, is obviously not appropriate for all types of fandom.

So while work in the area, such as that carried out by Jenkins (1992) in his study of the fans of *Star Trek*, has provided much towards an understanding of fandom and important insight into the experiences of fans, the framework within which such research is situated is problematic. Barker goes so far as to argue that the present conceptualisation of fans in the uncritical study of fandom as positive is not useful and he claims that ignoring history and context in favour of celebrating fandom is unhelpful (p.672). A more fruitful theoretical framework from which to approach the study of fans is required. It is the argument of this thesis that fans ought to be conceptualised with regard to the object or subject of their fandom. In other words, when studying fans of a television genre such as science-fiction or soap opera, questions about the meanings made and the pleasures derived are important[4]; whereas for research on sports fans, the central issues might more appropriately be those of identity and belonging. Studies of the fans of a media performer may usefully concentrate on concepts to do with identification, or admiration, or - as in this study - interaction and the formation of relationships. It is for this reason that this research connects media and audiences.

It is also worth mentioning here that it is not uncommon for those academics writing about fandom to be fans themselves. In their recent discussion of fan studies, Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) note that many of the accounts tend to be autobiographical (p.128). They also emphasize the self-reflexive nature of such accounts of fandom. Here the writers' examination of self (which tends to be retrospective) is central. In relation to studies of pop music fandom, they claim that:

> Significantly, the earlier studies were written in the main by women, and took a kind of confessional stance, often based in feminist ideas of the attempt to dissolve the divisions between the public and the private in accord with the idea that the personal is political. (p.127)

They refer to a piece of work by Sue Wise (1990) as an example. In this essay she "comes out" publicly as an Elvis fan and analyzes her involvement with Presley in the context of her own development as a feminist. Abercrombie and Longhurst go on to point out that more recently men have also begun to consciously write about fan feelings, and they suggest that this has in part been prompted by the success of books like Nick Hornby's (1992) *Fever Pitch*. In *Fever Pitch*, Hornby explains his football fandom and charts his life-long obsession with Arsenal. Abercrombie and Longhurst highlight the fact that a key theme in the accounts written by men is the attempt to deal with masculinity, and that, in writing autobiographically and self-reflexively, the fan attachment may be related to problematic or difficult life experiences. So, for instance, Hornby (1992) interprets the beginnings of his attachment to football as being bound up with his parents' divorce.

While he is not autobiographical to the same extent as those referred to above, Henry Jenkins is a researcher who is himself an involved fan. Acknowledging his own long-term enthusiasm for *Star Trek*, Jenkins notes that he writes "from the position of both an academic and a fan" (Tulloch and Jenkins, 1995, p.20), and he goes on to briefly explain his fandom within the context of his life and biography (p.21). His co-author, John Tulloch, is a fan of *Doctor Who* and admits to having followed the series for over 25 years (p.22). In the first chapter of their book, *Science Fiction Audiences: Watching Doctor Who and Star Trek*, Tulloch and Jenkins also talk about ethnographies of fandom. They refer to the ethnographic accounts of science-fiction fandom produced by Constance Penley, Camille Bacon-Smith, and Henry Jenkins himself. They highlight the fact that these ethnographers have sought to open a "dialogue" with the fan community and, in so doing, have negotiated the tension between "distance" and

"proximity" in various ways.[5] While Bacon-Smith adopts a more traditional and distanced anthropological perspective (positioning herself as an objective outsider), Penley and Jenkins acknowledge their part in the communities they researched in an attempt to achieve a "middle ground" (p.19). Tulloch and Jenkins claim that:

> The best ethnography, as Tony Giddens suggests, is characterized by a fluid movement between 'critical distance' from and 'mutual knowledge' with the reception community: distance facilitates understandings that may not be fully recognizable by participants within a culture while proximity or 'mutual knowledge' allows for a recognition of pleasures and meanings central to the participant's cultural experience. (p.19)

There are a number of studies in which researchers have acknowledged that they share - or once shared - their subjects' fandom. In her study *Watching Dallas*, Ien Ang (1985) states, "At one time I really belonged to the category of devoted *Dallas* fans" (p.12). In the introduction to *Soap Opera and Women's Talk*, Mary Ellen Brown claims that, "mine is an ethnographic study in which I am a member of the group, a fan and also the researcher" (cf. Geraghty, 1998, p.142). Green, Jenkins, and Jenkins (1998) explain that they chose to study particular fan apas (Amateur Press Associations), rather than other sources, "simply because we are members of them" (p.12). Cheryl Harris (1998b) writes about the fan organisation *Viewers for Quality Television* and "confesses" her own 5-year involvement with the group (p.46). Nancy Baym (1998) is a participant in the computer-mediated fan community she is writing about: an Internet discussion group for soap opera fans (p.114). Researching the computer-mediated communication of Sherlock Holmes fans, Roberta Pearson (1997) notes that, "I am myself a 'lapsed' Sherlockian, who for many years participated in Holmes fandom and count many of my best friends among those whom I met in Sherlockian circles" (p.160).

Here in the introduction to this study, it is crucial that my own fandom is acknowledged. I have been a fan of the media personality being examined since 1985 and therefore share much in common with the fans who served as research subjects. This "mutual knowledge" benefited the project greatly. Before beginning the field research I wrote an autobiographical account of my own fan career, and this helped plan the subsequent investigation and structure the findings. There was no problem "opening a dialogue" with the fan community. Throughout the study both myself and the research subjects were conscious of the fact that I could understand and empathise closely with them in a way that an outsider could not have done. In writing about their experiences I was largely writing about my own. However I also became more clearly aware of some differences in all our fan careers, and maintained a sufficiently "critical distance" to facilitate my reflections on the experiences written about.

As well as benefiting the field research, my fandom also helped with the writing of the case study chapter. While in theory any well-known media persona could have been selected for study, Phillip Schofield was chosen mainly because, having been a fan of his since the age of thirteen, I already possessed a substantial amount of knowledge about him.

Clearly it is possible to be both a researcher and a fan of the subject being researched – although these are very different positions, they are not incompatible. As a fan, I am interested in Schofield as an individual and am attached to him emotionally. As a researcher, my interest is in Schofield as part of broadcasting's personality system, as an example of a media persona, and as a subject of fandom. Therefore when reading

Schofield "the text" and talking to fans in my role as an analyst, my concerns are very different from those I have in my role as a fan.

Later in this thesis it is argued that the nature of an individual's fandom and the level of its intensity can vary over time as priorities change. This has been the case in my own experience. As reflected upon in my fan autobiography, when I embarked on this study I was already less emotionally involved with and dedicated to Schofield than I had been previously. Throughout the course of this research the strength of my fandom and my investment in it have continued to decline. With my work taking priority over my fandom, whilst I will always be fond of Schofield and consider myself a fan, my commitment to him is now predominantly motivated by academic interest.

Barker (1993, p.672) has noted that studies of fandom have neglected to consider the actual texts to which the fans being investigated are committed. He claims that Jenkins (1992), for instance, shows no interest in the nature of science fiction programmes as texts. This lack initially appears to be redressed in Jenkins' subsequent work with Tulloch (1995). Here the question they pose asks, "Why are *Star Trek* and *Doctor Who* so popular?". The second chapter in their book discusses theories of the science fiction text. They later note, "It is because we agree with the call from a number of theorists for a return to textual analysis, that we looked in an early chapter at 'the texts of science fiction'" (p.68). Yet it is mainly through dialogue with fans and followers that they examine the continuing popularity of these series, not by looking at the programmes themselves (how audiences read the show is a main theme of the book which, as they state, is very much influenced by the "active audience" movement). In this study

however as much thought is given to the text or subject of the fans' attention as to the fans themselves.

Content

The interest of this study is in the consumption of broadcasting's personality system, but it is acknowledged that before attempting to understand audience members' experiences it is vital to investigate the personality system itself. Part One of this thesis analyses the media and Part Two researches the audience: thus the first part largely deals with production and the second with consumption.[6] This is achieved across five chapters as follows.

Part One contains three chapters. Chapter One examines broadcasting's "personality system" and builds on an article by John Langer (1981). The first section shows that broadcasting has developed a personality system to create a sense of familiarity and that it uses personality presenters to relate to audiences. The second section differentiates - in relation to genre - between different types of presenter and the significance of personality for each. In the third section, attention is drawn to the argument that public awareness of the construction of personae has undermined broadcasting's traditional personality system where sincerity is crucial. Chapter Two explores the idea that nowadays television and radio presenters make a career being "a professional personality". It highlights the fact that they operate as commodities in broadcasting's competitive marketplace and that their careers are looked after by managers and agents. The management company *James Grant Management* and its clients are discussed. Chapter Three is a case study of the media persona Phillip Schofield. In order to

understand Schofield's role as a presenter, it begins with a brief history of children's presentation and considers the genre of Saturday morning television. It is argued that Schofield occupied an unprecedented place within young people's popular culture. The chapter goes on to examine his persona in more detail, looking at how it is constructed from both his professional and private lives, and how it is consistent with the discourses of broadcasting's personality system.

Part Two contains two chapters. Chapter Four is a review of the existing literature from a number of perspectives on para-social interaction and the mediated relationships of "intimacy at a distance" that develop between presenters and their audiences. The chapter begins by explaining Horton and Wohl's (1956) theory of para-social interaction and, having outlined their much referenced article, critically reviews a number of subsequent studies from the uses and gratifications tradition. It then goes on to explain in some detail work that takes a cultural approach to the topic. The findings from my own empirical study are presented in Chapter Five. This research involved conducting in-depth interviews with four of Phillip Schofield's fans. These fans are part of a fan community and the formation of this social group is briefly outlined. The chapter concentrates on the interviewees' responses to Schofield as a presenter (focusing in particular on what it was about him that appealed to them), their views on him as a professional personality, and their building a relationship with him. The development of their fan careers is also considered.

In the concluding chapter the death of the television presenter Jill Dando is addressed. The relevance of this recent event is highlighted and its significance in the light of the arguments made in the preceeding chapters is discussed. The main conclusions drawn

in this thesis may facilitate an understanding of both the public response to Dando's death and the way in which she was talked and written about in the media following her murder.

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[1]Root (1986) suggests that the American term for a newsreader - the "anchor" - connotes a safe, secure, fixed point (pp.83-84).

[2]A number of years later, Harris (1998a) was still making a similar argument with regard to the social sciences: a field in which, she asserts, fandom is profoundly untheorized and "the topic is still in its infancy for all its pervasiveness" (p.4). She too claims that, "much of the discussion around fandom has essentially pathologized it" (p.5), and that, "the authentic voices of fans themselves are rarely heard" (ibid.).

[3]Jenkins regards himself as "one of a generation of young American cultural studies scholars strongly influenced by the powerful mentorship of John Fiske" (Tulloch and Jenkins, 1995, p.21).

[4]Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998, p.154) highlight the different approach taken by Harrington and Bielby (1995) in their discussion of day-time soap opera fans in the USA. Unlike the science fiction fans examined by Bacon-Smith (1992), Jenkins (1992), and Penley (1992), these soap opera fans do not generate new texts. It is argued that this lack of production is related to the pleasure they find in the already existing product. Thus, as has also been argued by Grossberg (1992), the fan forms an affective link to the subject or object of their fandom, and the notion of pleasure is critical. Abercrombie and Longhurst explain that, "Harrington and Bielby emphasize the pleasure that is involved in these affective connexions and suggest that this should be considered in its own sense as a form of love attachment rather than being explained in other terms as a form of struggle and opposition" (p.155). Harrington and Bielby argue that, while they may not always engage in "concrete" (or material) production, fan feelings and identifications are central in fans' construction of identity.

[5]Helen Merrick (1997) also highlights the difference in approach taken by Bacon-Smith and Penley (pp.56-57).

[6]However it is important to remember that, inextricably linked, there is some overlap between the processes of production and consumption, and it is both impossible and undesirable to separate them completely.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

BROADCASTING'S PERSONALITY SYSTEM

Introduction

Chapter One examines broadcasting's personality system. It aims to provide a detailed understanding of how this system operates in contemporary society. The chapter includes both academic and non-academic sources. Relevant academic theories are appropriated and explained. In addition these are exemplified by specific media materials drawn from a range of sources. Quotes from television and radio, magazines and newspapers are used to support the theory and to represent the industry where appropriate. This enables the argument to be expanded in the academic discussion here. These non-academic, "secondary" resources were collected from personal media consumption over the period of study. A key word search of *The Guardian* and *The Observer* on CD-ROM was also carried out and this yielded further supplementary material.

Chapter One is divided into three sections. The first shows why broadcasting has developed a personality system and how it uses personality presenters tc relate to audiences. This argument is then developed in both of the following sections where a particular aspect of, or issue relating to, the contemporary system is discussed in greater detail: the second section deals with genre and personality, the third with performed sincerity.

Section 1: Characteristics of Broadcasting's Personality System

This first section looks at the characteristics of broadcasting's personality system and is built around key points from an article by John Langer (1981). Langer concentrates on

television's personalities, but this study is not limited to this medium. Throughout the thesis reference is made to "broadcasting's personality system" to include presenters from both television and radio. Langer's argument is elaborated with additional academic and non-academic material. The work of Paddy Scannell (1989, 1996) is central here. A lecture broadcast by the BBC and material from the *Radio Times* are, amongst others, sources used to illustrate industry views.

This section aims to show the significance of broadcasting's domestic context of consumption in order to explain why broadcasting uses personality presenters to talk to and to appeal to audiences. It is intended to make clear the role of presenters in the personalization of broadcasting and to emphasise their centrality. Focus is given to the fact that "being yourself" is a main requirement made of presenters, and the importance of integrity is considered. This section then proceeds to highlight the performance of ordinariness given by presenters and to stress the foregrounding of intimacy and accessibility.

Broadcasting's Domestic Context of Consumption

In his article entitled "Television's 'personality system'", Langer (1981) writes about the personalities viewers encounter on television. Throughout the article, Langer contrasts television's personality system with cinema's star system and gives an overview of some of the elements that constitute both. This conventional starting point - used by Ellis (1992) and Tolson (1996) - is the most suitable from which to begin this study's consideration of broadcasting's personality system. Situating the paradigm of the star system of classic cinema in opposition to television's personality system, as Langer does

in the following quotation, is useful when going on to examine how and why the personality system works. The key characteristics of television's personality system are emphasised in bold as much of this section will be concerned with exploring these.

> Whereas the star system operates from the realms of the spectacular, the inaccessible, the imaginary, presenting the cinematic universe as 'larger than life', **the personality system is cultivated almost exclusively as 'part of life'**, whereas the star system always has the ability to place distance between itself and its audiences through its insistence on 'the exceptional', **the personality system works directly to construct and foreground intimacy and immediacy**; whereas contact with stars is unrelentingly sporadic and uncertain, **contact with television personalities has regularity and predictability**; whereas stars are always playing 'parts' emphasizing their identity as 'stars' as much - perhaps even more than - the characters they play, **television personalities 'play' themselves**, whereas stars emanate as idealizations or archetypal expressions, to be contemplated, revered, desired and even blatantly imitated, stubbornly standing outside the realms of the familiar and the routinized, **personalities are distinguished for their representativeness, their typicality, their 'will to ordinariness', to be accepted, normalized, experienced as *familiar***. (Langer, 1981, pp.354-355)

The crucial point here is the context of consumption.[1] Films are consumed in a very different context from television.[2] Television viewing generally takes place in the home and, as a result, is very much embedded in a domestic setting and within the routines of everyday life. Raymond Williams (1990) discusses the fact that radio and television were developed for transmission to individual homes and for privatised reception. As he notes:

> It is interesting that the only developed 'mass' use of radio was in Nazi Germany, where under Goebbels' orders the Party organised compulsory public listening groups and the receivers were in the streets. There has been some imitation of this by similar regimes, and Goebbels was deeply interested in television for the same kind of use. What was developed within most capitalist societies, though called 'mass communication', was significantly different. (p.24)

He describes how radio sets were "consumer durables", which, as technology to serve a home-centred way of living, were introduced into the privatised, family home (pp.26-27). Similarly Roger Silverstone (1994) explores how television has come to be such an intimate part of our everyday lives. This is, he writes, "as the result of its occupation of the particular spaces and times of a basic level of social reality" (p.22). As a domestic medium, television is both received in a domestic environment, and in its content provides certain versions of domestic life. Whilst recognising that "the domestic" is a political category, that "domesticity" is therefore problematic, and questioning the meanings of its different dimensions - "home", "family", and "household" - Silverstone claims that:

> Television has become embedded in the complex cultures of our own domesticity. We can no more think of television as anything other than a necessary component of that domesticity than we can think of our domesticity without seeing both in the machine and the screen a reflection and an expression of that domestic life. (p.24)

He goes so far as to argue that television literally becomes "a member of the family" (p.40). Similarly, Barrie Gunter and Michael Svennevig (1987) argue that, "Television today is an integral part of the family household - almost another member of the family" (p.4).[3] Writing about television's involvement with family life over a decade ago, they claim that around 98% of all households in the UK have at least one television set: evidence of their assertion that "television is a part of everyday life" (p.1).

Paddy Scannell (1988, p.24) writes that because it appears as a domestic utility, "always on tap like water, gas or electricity," radio must always have an available content. Both radio and television, as domestic media, are constantly accessible. Williams (1990)

argues that the central television experience is "the fact of flow" (p.95), and that the defining characteristic of broadcasting is "programming as sequence" (p.86). Furthermore, always available when required, these media are routinely encountered and can be watched casually. Tony Wilson (1993) also notes that, "Unlike cinema, the act of watching television is generally not a special event. It is contained in the uneventful . . . the commonplace" (p.28). He argues that television projects the life-world or daily environment of its intended audience and that it uses "the familiar" to do so (p.5). "Television is," he says, "the communication of the familiar" (p.22).

In seeking to construct an everyday life-world viewers can recognise as their own, Wilson highlights the fact that it is usually assumed that the domestic audience takes the form of families. To illustrate his theory, he offers an analysis of ITV's former daily breakfast magazine programme *Good Morning Britain.* He shows how, "from a studio domesticity of lounge, settees, orange juice and coffee pots" (p.23), the programme and its presenters attempt to project a settled, recognizable, familial life-world. It is assumed that viewers experience this life-world as 'normal", "ordinary", and "taken-for-granted" (p.25). Wilson also points to the "domestic ordinariness of the programme's address" (p.29).[4] Similarly, Elizabeth Wilson (1984) writes about BBC *Breakfast Time*'s façade of domesticity and pretence of a cosy family set-up. She notes the living room set and the fact that the presenters supposedly represent familial normality.

In keeping with the circumstances under which it is viewed, then, television foregrounds the familiar and the intimate. Its system for doing so is one that uses personalities, as Langer (1981) explains:

> The act of television watching is found in the intimate and familiar terrain of everyday life where we receive television's own 'intimacies' and 'familiarities' brought to us through its personalities. (p.356)

John Ellis (1992) also examines the characteristic differences between cinema and broadcast TV, and compares the use of these two media. Discussing "stars as a cinematic phenomenon" (p.91), he argues that television yields personalities rather than stars. That this is so is regarded as a consequence of the fact that broadcast TV is received overwhelmingly in domestic surroundings. Ellis explains that the medium has developed distinctive forms and practices to suit the circumstances within which it is used. He reflects on the household context of reception and makes important assertions about the "domesticity" of television. Unlike cinema, which provides entertainment outside the home, broadcast TV is already in the home. Ellis writes:

> The TV set is another domestic object, often the place where family photos are put: the direction of the glance towards the personalities on the TV screen being supplemented by the presence of 'loved ones' immediately above. Broadcast TV is also intimate and everyday, a part of home life rather than any kind of special event. (p.113)

Shaun Moores (1997) also comments that broadcasting might then be said to be "part of the furniture of ordinary daily life in private homes" (p.216) and, furthermore, that its modes of address and presentation are "shaped by the profoundly domestic character or 'feel' of broadcasting" (ibid.). Accordingly, Ellis (1992) asserts that broadcast TV's performers are not stars in the cinematic sense because they "appear too intimate and domestic, lacking the dimensions of distance and difference that cinematic performance will tend to give [actors]" (p.243). He writes of television personalities that, "Their notoriety results from their fairly constant presence on the medium rather than their

rarity; they are familiar rather than remote" (p.107). Similarly, writing about the personalisation of politics, Andrew Wernick (1991) says that:

> The small screen domesticates those whom it makes famous. It is not just that the images of people we see on a domestic set (unlike in the movies) are literally smaller than life size. Their repeated appearance in the family hearth also destroys their rarity value by making them, precisely, familiar. (p.138)

Like Langer and Ellis, if more briefly, Scannell (1989) also contrasts the differing conditions of reception for cinema (an overwhelming experience) and broadcasting (an underwhelming experience). Whereas cinema stands apart from routine, daily life, his claims about broadcasting are that; "Its pleasures are ordinary, specifically intended as such, adapted to the conditions of listening and viewing in mundane, daily domestic contexts" (p.152). Scannell (1991, p.5) says audiences treat broadcasting as a taken-for-granted part of the routines of ordinary life. Describing how the world in broadcasting appears, he too uses adjectives such as ordinary, mundane, accessible, knowable, familiar, and recognizable. Throughout his more recent work too, Scannell (1996) reiterates that broadcasting "does the job of being ordinary very well" (p.95). Broadcasting, he says, "produces itself as part of and as for the ordinary everyday world, for that is the world in which listeners and viewers ordinarily live" (1996, p.15).

Talking to Domestic Audiences

It was not always the case that broadcasters took the conditions of reception into account and oriented themselves towards the home context. As a historian and theorist of British public service broadcasting, Scannell shows that in its early radio days the BBC tended to suppress the context in which people were receiving its output and to

ignore the implications of a domestic listening environment. Using serious, impersonal, and authoritarian modes of address, speakers on radio delivered monologue speeches along the lines of a lecture or sermon. Before long it became clear that this was inappropriate and unsuited to broadcasting. This problem of communicative style has been described by David Cardiff as "the domestication of public utterance" (Scannell, 1989, p.148). Broadcasters needed to discover an effective way of addressing absent audiences, to learn how to talk to the listener in a home setting, and to speak to him/her, not as part of a crowd, but as an individual. What was required was the ordinary voice of everyday life - in other words, they were seeking a conversational style. Scannell quotes Hilda Matheson, the first Head of BBC Talks (1927-32), who considered it:

> useless to address the microphone as if it were a public meeting, or even to read it essays or leading articles. The person sitting at the other end expected the speaker to address him personally, simply, almost familiarly, as man to man. (p.149)[5]

So until broadcasters understood and recognised the significance of the conditions of reception and aligned their communicative behaviour with those circumstances, there was a communicative unease between the institution and its audiences. Scannell (1989) outlines the development of effective styles of address and performance that overcame this by orienting themselves appropriately to the setting, thus generating a sense of ease. By the late 1930s broadcasters had discovered that, far from listening attentively as it had been intended, most people were inclined to treat their radio as a companionable and sociable domestic resource, its content as cheerful background noise. Acknowledging such practices, they began to adapt their output to fit in with the ordinary, daily life and routines of the population.

By the end of the 1940s, in a developmental process that emerged first in entertainment ahead of other programme areas, broadcasters were beginning to find new, accessible communicative styles which were more spontaneous, relaxed, and personal in character. However according to Scannell it was not until the late 1950s, as a result of competition from the new, populist channel ITV, and coupled with a changing social and political climate, that broadcasting's "universe of discourse" was transformed (p.145). The populist stance adopted in the 1950s crucially changed the style and manner of broadcasting. Thus contemporary broadcast talk, self-conscious and self-reflexive, is "intended for and addressed to actual listeners and viewers, listening and viewing in real-world circumstances" (Scannell, 1991, p.1), and as such it is "intentionally communicative" (ibid.).

Writing about the direct mode of announcing used by broadcasters, Erving Goffman (1981, p.236) distinguishes between "aloud reading" and "fresh talk". He says that direct announcing principally involves the former, not the latter. However because "the critical task of the announcer is to produce an effect of spontaneous, fluent speech" (p.237), Goffman explains that, "if aloud reading is involved, the fact that it is will be somehow downplayed, rendering it easy for the audience to fall into feeling that fresh talk is occurring" (p.238). In other words, when a presenter is reading from a script, he/she will do so as if speaking his/her own words. As Goffman points out, if there is an error in a script an announcer has not prepared himself, then it is revealed that he is intentionally faking fresh talk (p.256). However more usually, when successful the simulation of fresh talk produces a sense of spontaneity. Other techniques described by Goffman, through which the impression of spontaneity is achieved, are "the projection of apparent personal belief in what is said" (p.239), and "editorial elaboration" (p.240).

Even though, as he notes, ad-libs are mostly formulaic remarks and expressions, ad-libbing in the course of reading a prescribed text gives the speech an overall fresh talk character.[6] The commitment announcers make to maintaining what is heard as fresh talk reflects how important it is that they link their styles of talk to what is characteristic of everyday conversation.[7]

Clearly then broadcasting's discourse is not merely about content: *how* things are said (the expressive dimensions of communication) is just as important as *what* is said. For broadcasting to be effective, a relationship of social dialogue between an institution and its audience is necessary. As the communicative process is one of sociable intent that involves establishing relationships with audiences, what better way to go about this than to have presenters who are "personalities" as the representatives of that institution? This is the "facework" discussed by Moores (1995a, 1995b). Through personality presenters, the ordinary, informal conversation and mundane social interaction that Scannell argues characterize the communicative domain of broadcasting (as they characterize the contexts of day-to-day life) can be implemented. They can adopt the interactive idioms of interpersonal life to talk *to* the audience: not *down to* or *at* them (important distinctions made by Scannell, 1996, p.24). They can engage in conversation that appears informal and even seemingly spontaneous. Wilson (1993), for example, points out that television presenters' address is "user-friendly" (p.33), and that they draw upon the speech genres of familiar conversation, such as anecdote (p.34). Tolson (1985, p.22) writes that anecdotes are more or less spontaneous, casual, and habitual. Furthermore, informality is established when presenters talk about themselves (this shall be discussed later with reference to Montgomery, 1986): indeed, Goffman (1981, p.296) notes that the restriction of self-reporting is a feature of formality.

The Personalization of Broadcasting

Langer (1981) claims that (under conditions of modern capitalism with its ideology of personalization, its foregrounding and focus on individuals) what is regarded "good television" personalizes whenever possible:

> rarely using a concept or idea without attaching it to or transforming it through the 'category of the individual'. As a result, 'good television' is television that embodies and articulates a world of 'personalities' who thoroughly penetrate and organise its viewing agendas, or enter television by being on those agendas. (p.352)

He points to the centrality of presenters on television. Personality presenters can be thought of as personifying their medium.[8] It is largely through them that audiences relate to broadcasting. Although, as shall be discussed in the next chapter, it is argued that the notion of "personality" did not really emerge until ITV, evidence suggests that since television began viewers have felt an affinity for the presenters who appear. According to a television documentary tracing the history of the BBC, in 1951 less than one in twenty homes owned a television set but those that did watch became closely involved with the faces they saw on screen. As Sylvia Peters, an announcer at this time, explains:

> The public were lovely, I mean they thought we were just part of the family, family friends. So wherever you went, the shops or anywhere, they'd just chat to you. I mean we weren't treated like sort of stars or anything, we were just one of them, you know. And they'd say, "Oh you didn't look very well last night dear," or, "I didn't like that dress you were wearing," or, you know, taking a very personal interest. (Bennett, 1997, November 4)

This phenomenon is recognised by the broadcasting industry. The Royal Television Society's Huw Wheldon Memorial Lecture of 1996, entitled *Facing the Public: Television Presenters and Their Audience* and delivered by BBC Broadcast's Chief Executive Will Wyatt (1996, November 16), looks at how television presenters have captured and maintained audiences over 60 years of television. Wyatt starts by noting that from the beginnings of television the public were fascinated by the medium, by its intimacy, and, in particular, by the people it brought into their living-rooms. This fascination, he claims, is reflected in the daily log of telephone calls to broadcasters, which is peppered with personal reactions to those who appear on the screen. He acknowledges that, "It's through the people who appear on the screen talking directly to the viewers that television connects most often and most effectively with the audience."

Langer (1981, p.352) claims that television has a 'systematic tendency' to use its personality system to appeal to viewers, incorporating some aspect of it into almost all genres. This personality system is pervasive, he says, in those genres that can be termed 'actuality forms', whose programmes are all to some extent organised around a central persona. This persona provides his or her 'on-air personality' as a crucial aspect of the programme's identity: the news 'reader', the current affairs 'anchorman', the talk show 'host', the quiz show 'master of ceremonies'. Clearly the personalities Trevor McDonald, Jeremy Paxman, Michael Parkinson, and Bob Monkhouse fit into these categories respectively, and are each a key factor in setting the tone of and giving the style to the programmes they present.

Furthermore, as Langer points out, such personae are 'real' not 'fictional'. Therefore the personality they provide on-air seems to be their own: that is, television presenters

appear to be being themselves because they are not playing the role of a 'character' as in fiction. Goffman (1981) notes that, "actors appear in character in a time, place, role and costume patently not their 'own'; announcers, on the other hand, present themselves in the same guise and name they use in their 'own' everyday life" (p.237). However, it must be noted here that early radio presenters did appear in identities other than their own: BBC broadcaster Wilfred Pickles, who started as an actor, performed as Billy Welcome in programmes from factories during the Second World War (Scannell, 1996, p.37).

Langer continues his point that television personalities exist as 'identities' within a programme by giving the example of the newsreader whom, during the panoramic flow of a news broadcast, remains the constant, unfaltering, and coherent identity. He also highlights:

> the persistent tendency of television to feature the name of its personalities in the programme titles . . . confirming right from the outset the critical centrality of the television personality's identity within the television flow and within the programme's own structure. The title proclaims unequivocally that this is *their* show, *their* vehicle where we can reliably and repeatedly encounter them . . . (p.358)[9]

Graham Brand and Paddy Scannell (1991, p.204) make the same argument in relation to radio, pointing out that most pop music programmes are known by the name of their DJ. DJs also routinely use devices such as personalised jingles to reiterate their identity (and that of the station and programme).

Again, these ideas about the importance placed on personalities are expressed by the broadcasting industry itself. Focusing on the centrality of television presenters, the BBC's Will Wyatt (1996) says that viewers':

> relationship with television, with a channel, with a programme, is often dependent on the people who appear. The public faces in the private places, the viewers' homes. Faces the public get to know, warm to, take an instant dislike to, love, hate, love to hate. The people who present the programmes do not just introduce them or carry out the function of saying the necessary words, in the minds of the audience they assume ownership. They're not just identified with a programme, they are its identity. The programme and its contents appear to emanate from them.[10]

It seems inevitable then that, as Wyatt claims, "the focus of praise or blame is likely to be the presenter," and, "most people's first response to a programme - do they like it or not - is usually, whether they be the most occasional viewer or the most experienced of producers or controllers, to be a response to the presenter." Therefore, as he recognises, the choice of presenter is vital. He says, "For the broadcaster as for the viewers, the match between programme and presenter is critical."[11]

While the content of a programme may change, usually the television or radio personality presenting it stays the same. This anticipated repetition and predictability helps sustain a structure of familiarity; as does its ritual regularity - another of television's central characteristics, according to Langer (1981, p.356). Whether daily or seasonally, television's cycles of repetition mean that personalities appear regularly. With each television appearance, a presenter builds up their persona, which is increasingly authenticated through subsequent regular appearances, until eventually they come across as a knowable and "genuine" personality (p.357).

Again like Langer, Brand and Scannell (1991) highlight the importance of regularity in establishing familiarity. They stress that "routinization is at the very heart of programmes and programming" (p.202), and that, via scheduling and formatting, broadcasting builds identity through repetition and regularity. Scheduling involves establishing familiar and regular patterns of output. They too argue that a key element in creating a programme format is the use of programme presenters whose identity, through time, comes to be perceived of as recognisable and familiar. Similarly, Wilson (1993) states that, "Television gives its intended audiences unending opportunities to recognize the familiar. It constructs its on-screen artefacts as a well-known presence within the viewer's life-world (a 'horizon of horizons') through frequent repetition of form, character and content" (p.20).

Professional Ideology about "Being Yourself"

Thus, through regularity and repetition within the flow of television, the personality system can readily facilitate a sense of familiarity for presenters who may then become knowable as genuine personalities. "Knowable" and "genuine" are two key words in media discussions of broadcasting personalities. In a central part of his lecture, Wyatt (1996) outlines the qualities possessed by a number of the pre-eminent presenters he cites. He talks about one quality needed by a presenter, which he calls a "sort of trick of the personality". This is:

> a way of behaving and of responding which allows you to be at home with the television camera in the artificial confines of a studio. Some of the most consummate presenters don't just look as if they're at home they look as if there's nowhere else they'd rather be.

Esther Rantzen is used as an illustrative example here. According to industry practitioners, appearing naturally at ease like this and making the job look easy requires skill, and the ability to do it well has been described as a rare talent (so therefore not all presenters possess this). For instance, Peter McHugh, *GMTV*'s director of programmes, said of presenter Anthea Turner (in defence of his signing her):

> There are only 20 people in the country who are capable of presenting live daily programmes and Anthea is one of them. It is the hardest job in the world - things can go wrong, but with Anthea, we know the viewers won't realise. If the satellite goes down, she can keep the conversation going to fill in. It is a great skill, because live television gives you away every time; if Anthea wasn't good, you would see it. (Culf, 1995, October 19)

McHugh recalls that Frank Bough "once paid Turner the ultimate compliment by telling her she makes people at home think they could be a presenter too" (ibid.). Anthea Turner herself has said that, "The art of a television presenter is to be natural in unnatural circumstances" (Treacher, 1994, October 29, p.6), and she repeated this almost word for word several years later, "The art of being a presenter is being natural in unnatural circumstances" ("Anthea Turner questionnaire," 1997, May 31-June 6).

Having introduced his notion of "the trick of the personality" (i.e., being at home on television), Wyatt (1996) continues to explain it as follows:

> The trick, well it is a performance. The performance that good presenters give is of themselves: but a little more so. If offering advice I'd say, "Be yourself, but with both the colour and the contrast knobs turned up a notch. You have to break through the screen, not by raising your voice but by raising your personality a touch. If this doesn't come easily it won't come at all. And it must be your personality. Try anything else and it will show." Good presenters are not different people off the screen from who they are on it. Individuality doesn't need to be loud and domineering, it's most essentially everyday and conversational.

Desmond Lynam is cited. The trick of the personality is, then, basically a way of relating easily to viewers by being what could be called a "televisual version" of oneself.

This point that television presenters appear to be "being themselves" is a crucial one. It will be given extensive theoretical discussion later in this chapter under the heading "Performed Sincerity", but for now this thesis concentrates on the fact that "being yourself" seems to be the main skill the industry demands from competent presenters. For example, Pozitiv Productions runs a one-day crash course in the art of television presenting. Tutor Glenn Kinsey asks his students, all aspiring presenters, to think of their favourite TV presenter (he lists Phillip Schofield, Jeremy Paxman, Cilla Black, and Terry Wogan) before going on to say:

> Whoever it is, you'll find that their great strength is a talent for being able to appear totally natural. But it's not really a talent. They're just accomplished at being themselves in front of the camera. The motto for today is, 'Be yourself'. (Rumbold, 1991, May 6)

In his book on the subject, Peter Baker (1995) gives the following advice to would-be radio presenters; "Don't be someone you're not; relax and be yourself, listeners will relate to you better. Playing yourself is easiest" (p.63). He also advises:

> Please, don't 'turn into a DJ' as soon as the microphone is on. The listener wants to hear *you*, the person, not some inane personage who says the sorts of things he *thinks* radio people should say. . . . You are communicating to real people, so why not speak their language? (p.62)

Peter Powell and Russ Lindsay, who are the managers of a number of successful presenters (including Anthea Turner and Phillip Schofield), gave their ten point guide to becoming a television and radio personality to the readers of *More* magazine (Baker, 1990, February). This included them saying:

> Peter: "You have to have charisma and a certain aura about you and you can't create that - you've either got it, or you haven't."
>
> Russ: "People think that you've got to be really young, whacky and leap around a lot to become a TV/radio personality, which isn't true. The key to success is simply to be yourself, and ideally that will be the type of person who can cope when stranded live on air, with no props or back-up for five minutes - and still be interesting."
>
> Peter: "I wouldn't recommend drama training if it's definitely TV presentation you want to get into. The main reason is that the two areas conflict - you can't act when you're presenting a TV programme, you have to be yourself and 100% natural. You can't spend hours rehearsing your 'part' when you're going out live; you have to be able to think on your feet." (p.44)

When presenters appear in clips on programmes like *It'll Be Alright on the Night* or *Auntie's Bloomers*, which show compilations of blunders, mistakes, and outtakes, they do not intend this as an opportunity for the revelation of the "real" person behind their persona. Rather, the fact that their personality remains consistent throughout such situations should be yet another confirmation that it is genuine. In the magazine extract below, presenter Caron Keating makes a similar point:

> 'The best piece of advice Mum [Gloria Hunniford] ever gave me was to be myself,' she adds. 'Particularly on camera. Great advice. If you try to put on a front, the real you will quickly show when things start going wrong.' (Woodward, 1990, October 20, p.17)

As does Sara Cox, presenter on Channel 4's *The Girlie Show*, who gives her top presenting tip as, "Be yourself. If you're a presenter, it's difficult to keep up a false character on screen because the mask will slip" ("Do put your daughter on TV," 1997, March 15-21, p.25).

An important part of their professional ideology then, this theme of "being yourself" is constantly reiterated by television presenters themselves, as in the following self-reflexive examples.[12]

Zoë Ball was interviewed on *This Morning* by Judy Finnigan (1996, January 15) about the debut she had just made presenting Channel 4's *The Big Breakfast*, on which she replaced Gaby Roslin. Ball had once worked as a researcher for *Granada*.

> Finnigan: It's interesting that you did get in front of the cameras through that route of researching, which is actually basically what I did as well. A lot of people, including Gaby, em, they start off sort of almost acting, they go to theatre school. But you didn't do that.
>
> Ball: No. And I think in a way, presenting wise, it's probably better to work behind the scenes because you have that, I don't know whether you agree, but, you have a better understanding of how it works and also you don't act, you are yourself . . .[13]

In an interview with journalist Andrew Duncan for the *Radio Times*, Gaby Roslin claims she went to the Guildford School for Dance and Acting, not to become an actress, but to develop her self-confidence because she was (and still is she claims) terribly shy. She stresses however that as a presenter she is not acting, she is herself.

> But, I [Andrew Duncan] say, any television show is essentially phoney because of all the electronic, digitalised paraphernalia apart from everything else. "No

> it's not. I'm adamant about the fact that television is honest. I'm no different on or off the screen, except I have more make-up on telly. I hope I don't have to be an actress. If I was, I don't think I could have carried on for nine years." (Duncan, 1996, June 1-7, p.18)

Like other proficient presenters, Roslin encourages the belief that by being herself she is "being natural". The idea of presenting "naturally" is enhanced when presenting is thought of as what the presenter was always meant to do, and when the skills involved are part of the presenter's "natural" personality. It gives added credibility. In his interview cited above, Duncan says of Roslin that, "it soon becomes clear she is one of the few television presenters with *genuine* curiosity" (p.17, my italics), and that:

> [Roslin] is the unthreatening, pretty girl-next-door type, as well as the archetypal child of TV. Her father, Clive, a freelance broadcaster, says, "She was born to be a presenter," and he and her mother sat her with her back to the set during *Blue Peter* so she could act out being Valerie Singleton. "It's all I ever wanted to be from the age of three - extraordinary, but true," she says (p.18).

Roslin says herself that she is just very nosy and that if she is at a dinner party or in a wine bar she always chats to people (p.17): and is therefore, readers are to believe, "naturally" suited to host a talk show. This hype about naturalness and being yourself will be interrogated later in the chapter when the key issue of "personality as performance" is engaged with.

Presenter of BBC programmes *Here and Now*, *999*, *The House Detectives*, and *The Travel Show*, Juliet Morris says of her career, "I feel I've been remarkably lucky. I think you just have to be yourself and be genuine - otherwise people see through you and won't trust you or your work" ("Everybody's talking about," 1997, June 28-July 4). And when asked what is the best piece of advice she has ever been given she answered, "Be

yourself. My family have always said it, but the first person I ever worked with, Chris Slade, told me it too. I've never forgotten that piece of advice" ("Juliet Morris questionnaire," 1997, October 11-17). Similarly, when asked for the best piece of advice he has ever been given, Nicky Campbell (host on Radio 5 Live and presenter of television debate show *Wednesday Night Live*) replied, "Be yourself. That's the best advice to a broadcaster" ("Nicky Campbell questionnaire," 1998, August 15-21). Presenter of BBC1's children's show *Live and Kicking* and ITV's quiz *Talking Telephone Numbers*, Emma Forbes said the following, "I have actually been turned down for a job because I wasn't blonde. I was quite prepared to dye my hair - but at the end of the day I decided I wanted to be myself" (Rozsnyai, 1996, January 20, p.47).

So dominant is the industry's notion of "being yourself" in television (and radio) presentation, that the concept was extended to a "personality" generated by computer. Max Headroom was the world's first computer-generated television presenter. He was introduced in the 1985 science fiction drama of the same name. Asked to briefly speak on the topic, Channel 4's first Chief Executive Jeremy Isaacs (1997, December 31) said of Max Headroom, "He's just, he's just himself".

And as the following example suggests, according to professional ideology, when presenters are not being themselves things can start to go wrong. Zoë Ball's seven-month stint with *The Big Breakfast* turned out to be a disastrous and unhappy time about which she says:

> . . . they didn't know whether they wanted me to be another Gaby Roslin or a young, sexy thing. They put my hair in a funny style, dressed me in horrible suits. Instead of putting my foot down and saying, 'This is me, and this is what I do', I tried to fit into what everyone wanted and it totally backfired. I couldn't

> please anyone - especially myself. I thought I was terrible and that my career in television was dead. (Duncan, 1997, July 12-18, p.16)

Presenter of BBC series *Food and Drink* and *The Great Antiques Hunt*, Jilly Goolden believes her success came from just being herself. She faced a similar problem to Zoë Ball when she was directed to behave in a certain way in front of the camera. But she says:

> I couldn't be someone else. I'm not a newscaster, or an actress. I can't deliver lines. I am just me. It got to the stage where I planned to chuck it in. . . . It was just that I was unable to be anyone but myself, so I thought to hell with it. It was making life a misery. . . . I thought, 'Sod it with knobs on. I'm going to be myself and won't do as I'm told.' It worked. (Duncan, 1997, May 3-9, p.17)

Furthermore she says, "I seriously hate 'celebrity' stuff because I scruff around looking like an unmadeup, tatty mum and it's exasperating to be noticed" (p.14). The *Radio Times* feature interview from which these quotes are taken includes a photograph of Goolden with her children (Oriel, 12, Verity, 10, and Philip, 5), and their pets, whose names are given also. This photo appears beneath the selected and enlarged quotation, "I'm also a pretty full-time mum - I'm at home for long periods" (p.16). So not only is Goolden being herself, but in doing so she is also being ordinary.

The Importance of Integrity

This section will look at work carried out by Laurie Taylor and Bob Mullan (1986) for their book *Uninvited Guests*. In co-operation with the qualitative research firm *The Research Business*, they conducted nation-wide research into what viewers and listeners think about television and radio. Twenty discussion groups were held involving 193

people. In addition they drew on material gathered by BBC researchers from approximately 30 other groups and had access to studies conducted by the Research Department of the IBA. This information was supplemented by a national enquiry undertaken on their behalf by the IBA in which a representative sample of 3000 television viewers in the UK were asked their opinion on a number of statements (those raised in the discussion groups). In addition, the IBA, the BBC, and BARB gave them access to the relevant audience composition figures. They also carried out a small survey on the coverage of popular television in the popular press, realising it is impossible to talk about the former without referring to the latter (p.11): everyday conversation about television refers to personal details about presenters, for example, and this information is largely derived from tabloids and magazines.

In their book, Taylor and Mullan take a positive view of television and its audiences. They claim, for example, that in their account viewers are "anything but passive and accepting" (p.12). However it is worth noting that Taylor and Mullan's work has been unfavourably reviewed, and largely ignored, in cultural studies. Criticising their book, Ann Gray (1987) suggests that the data source is too eclectic: in addition to information drawn from the various discussion groups, studies, and surveys listed above, viewers' letters to publications and television companies are included, as are press reports and articles, and the findings from an interview with one journalist are also reported. Gray comments:

> The variety of material could well have generated several books, and it is the major weakness of this one that it presents a confusion of 'voices' from such different and disparate sources in an apparently arbitrary fashion. Although the results of the group interviews form the major source for quotes, other bits of 'evidence' seem to be given the same weight. (p.26)

She also recognises that the book - subtitled *The Intimate Secrets of Television and Radio* and featuring images of Terry Wogan and Joan Collins on the cover - would seem to be aimed at a wider readership than that of academics already knowledgeable about the subject. This fact may well partly account for its dismissal within Media Studies. Gray is also critical of Taylor and Mullan's failure to provide a breakdown of the discussion groups and to give social indices beyond simply identifying the participants by gender and age. She claims the result is that "at the end the only response possible is 'don't people say some interesting things about television!'" (p.26). While it is agreed that the book's contribution to an understanding of "the audience" is slight, what is said about the television content under discussion is thought to be useful for this thesis.

One chapter in the book is devoted to television's hosts. Taylor and Mullan describe this segment of television life as "the arena of 'pure' personality" (p.69). Personalities, they argue, do not claim any special expertise as critic, journalist, commentator, or performer but that rather they are putting forward their own individuality. Taylor and Mullan go on to say that a personality's success depends upon allowing us "to see through to some recognisable inner person - someone who looks and sounds much like us" (p.71). They recognise that while some personalities may be fabricated, "their persistence rests upon a strong belief that there is little to choose between their private and public lives" (ibid.). They note that:

> When viewers were talking about such people they regularly spoke of their private and public lives as interchangeable. An observation that 'Wogan is this' or 'Parkinson does that' was thought likely to be true both on and off the screen. (Any discrepancies between the two worlds could easily be handled by such statements as 'Well, you can tell he's like that from looking at him' or 'I'd have guessed that about him' - the covering phrases of the loving parent who 'knows' their offspring, whatever they might occasionally get up to.) (ibid.)

Taylor and Mullan also report findings that indicate the crucial importance of integrity for popularity. Viewers were asked to name their favourite chat-show host and agreement about the top four was absolute: Terry Wogan, Michael Aspel, Russell Harty, and Michael Parkinson. When asked which personalities are most like themselves in real life, the order given was exactly the same. This can be said to demonstrate that the more a personality is thought to be 'like themself' in their television appearances, the more they are liked: or, that the more they are liked, the more they are regarded as being 'like themself' (p.72). It is disappointing however that Taylor and Mullan make no reference to gender: neither the gender of presenters liked nor the gender of audience members in relation to their preferences.

Taylor and Mullan talk about viewers' attitudes to the most popular host, Terry Wogan. They mention the "almost maternal concern about his clothes and eating habits" (p.73), and the assumption at the heart of his show that "one's show-biz personality must be worn lightly" (p.75): the latter enhancing his self-presentation as "one of us". He is self-effacing and self-deprecating, refusing to take himself or his show too seriously. When trying to explain Wogan's popularity, one characteristic they highlight is the degree of collusion that he establishes between himself and his audience.[14] It is claimed that his use of visual asides, "unite viewers and guests into a genial commentary upon the whole business of the chat show itself" (p.76). Yet crucially this non-verbal communication is perceived as natural not performed. Taylor and Mullan state:

> No one, however, regarded Wogan's visual asides as a practised technique, or considered the technical facilities which might be needed for him to bring them off. They were part of his personality. The way he was. The reason other chat-show hosts did not employ a similar style of communication was also thoroughly personal - part of themselves, not calculated. (p.77)

Likewise, viewers spoke of the fact that Parkinson avoids looking directly or looks away more because he is a shy person. It is pointed out that Michael Parkinson was criticised in several of the groups. Some animosity was due to viewers feeling that his interviews were scripted and this raised suspicions that he was merely giving performances (pp.78-79). Again, in contrast to the popular response to Wogan, some viewers tended to be less complimentary about Russell Harty. In particular his self-consciousness, "acted" or affected manner, formal turns of phrase, and camp style were not always welcomed (pp.80-81). Interestingly George Melly, having earlier pointed out how significant it is that the public address television 'familiars' by their first names, notes that whereas everybody calls Parkinson 'Parky', nobody refers to Russell Harty as 'Russ' or even 'Russell' (Fantoni & Melly, 1980, p.60). This is attributed to Harty's approach being more remote and less matey. These examples illustrate the importance to viewers that presenters appear "natural" and "down-to-earth".

Taylor and Mullan (1986) argue that chat-show hosts are examples of what they call the "pure personality": that is, those who have the capacity for appearing to be exactly what they are. The researchers claim that the pure personality is someone "we feel to be just like us" (p.82), and this makes them ideally suited to be recognised as figures with whom audience members would potentially interact. Their skills are ordinary, their private and public lives are assumed to be associated, and, as a result, they seem "to provide a special opportunity for us to feel that they somehow represent us by their presence on the screen" (p.120). Taylor and Mullan describe pure personalities as "our television surrogates" (ibid.).

The Performance of the Ordinary

So audiences are encouraged to relate to presenters who persuade viewers that they are genuinely being themselves. (Sincerity is an issue that will be critically discussed later.) Furthermore, they are better accepted when what they are is ordinary. Representative, typical, and normalized were words used by Langer (1981) to describe the personalities who appear on television. In conversation with Robert Robinson (1986, November 18) in a BBC documentary, Bill Cotton too talks about personalities selling ordinariness - he uses Eammon Andrews as his example - and believes that this is what the public likes. According to Jane Root (1986), the BBC's *Tonight* (an early evening news magazine programme) which began in 1958, marked the growth of the ordinary presenter. With the focus on human interest, *Tonight* "claimed to speak on behalf of 'ordinary people' by the use of presenters who strived to be 'just like us'" (p.93). Wilson (1993) quotes an example from his analysis of *Good Morning Britain* of an occasion when it was asserted that the programme's presenters are different from some of their viewers by virtue of being *more ordinary* than them:

> the rain will increase in the south-west, but with a bit of luck that middle bit's going to stay reasonably bright for your posh hats and frocks and everything at the races, those of you who are going, not us underprivileged folks, of course. (p.25)

Wilson talks about the unity and equality - albeit "mythical" - created by the programme around its viewers and presenters (p.29).

In his comparison of cinema and broadcast TV, Ellis (1992) argues that whereas the cinema star is ordinary and extraordinary at the same time, "television does not produce

a play between the ordinariness and extraordinariness of its performers because . . . it cannot present the lives of its performers as anything particularly glamorous" (p.105). He notes that there is much less difference between image and performance for a television performer than for a film star, and goes on to point out that "the subsidiary circulation of material about them [television personalities] is more concerned with discovering if there is a personality separate from that of the television role than it is with the paradox of the ordinary-but-extraordinary" (p.107). (This point is further discussed in a later section of this chapter.) Ellis explains that television's stress is on the ordinariness of its performers because they exist as known and familiar people, in the same space as the television audience (p.106). As discussed previously, this space is domestic and, as such, is assumed by broadcasters to be familial. Ellis highlights the fact that television creates a sense of familiarity "based on a notion of the familial which is assumed to be shared by all" (p.137). Although this assumption is in fact erroneous, television and its presenters continue to concentrate on "the family" as a presumed reflection of their audience [as is the case with Cilla Black in her interview with Duncan below, for example].

Thus, broadcasting claims that it gives us presenters who are "just like us". This thesis has previously said that it is through personalities that the ordinary conversation and mundane social interaction, which Scannell argues characterize the communicative domain of broadcasting, can be implemented. This is only further enhanced when the personalities themselves seem ordinary, down-to-earth, and homely. In particular, it makes sense to use a working class presenter to talk to a working class audience in order to overcome the awkwardness of attempting to talk across class barriers. This first effectively happened in radio with Wilfred Pickles. According to Andy Kershaw,

"Pickles was a much loved broadcaster, one who brought the BBC closer to the people. Through his post-war game-show, *Have a Go!*, he was, for millions of listeners, the first radio presenter who was 'one of us'" (Thomas, 1997, October 18). Contributing to this radio documentary, Scannell adds that for at least a ten-year period (the late 1940s and most of the 1950s) *Have a Go!* was the most popular programme on radio: people loved it and, crucially, they valued Pickles.

As a "people programme", *Have a Go!* was the predecessor to contemporary television shows with contestants like *The Generation Game* or *Blind Date*. In "people shows" like these, and others such as *Noel's House Party* and Michael Barrymore's *My Kind of People*, the personality presenter is involved in often extensive face-to-face interaction with the ordinary members of the general public taking part. It is important in this genre that they can chat, joke, and laugh together, and to this end these hosts present themselves as men and women "of the people". From the discussion thus far, it is logical to present such an image to the audience at home too when, as has been suggested, a down-to-earth, conversational approach from presenters who are representative and typical is thought to be best suited to relate to viewers.[15]

Cilla Black is a presenter famed for her ordinariness and for the factors central to this concept: namely that she is working class (her father was a docker and her mother worked on a market stall) and that she comes from Liverpool (a city in the north of England which is conventionally known for its working class, down-to-earth character and inhabitants). For instance, she is introduced as "the famously 'ordinary' Cilla Black" by journalist Andrew Duncan (1997, July 19-25, p.15) in his interview with her in the *Radio Times*. Black started her career as a singer and became a pop star in the 1960s. A

television presenter since the early 1980s, she has continued to sing on her entertainment programmes. However these performances are less significant to her current persona than her role as a woman "of the people".

It is in interview features such as Duncan's that the "will to ordinariness" of presenters like Cilla Black is reproduced. Giving her the opportunity to talk about herself, the media facilitates Black's attempts to convince audiences that she is ordinary. For instance, in this *Radio Times* feature a photograph from her wedding day and another showing her with her son at his graduation ceremony accompany the text. Setting the tone of the article, Duncan states at the beginning that she has no mystery, she really is what she seems: this includes "a 53-year-old, happily spreading mum" (p.15). She herself says, "I'll guess they'll say 'girl next door' - well, 'auntie' next door. I'd really like to be 'granny next door', although my sons show no sign of marrying yet" (ibid.). She frequently talks about her sons, referring to them by name, and colloquially as "our". As Duncan points out, conversation returns constantly to the family, which she herself describes as "very down to earth".

Personalities are "normalised" when presented as "just like everyone else". Normalising material in this interview includes the talk of family life: Black mentions the death of her mother and her sadness that she won't be there to see her receive her OBE, and she says of herself, "I've had the same difficulties as any mum with three children" (p.17). Or, she can state her typicality explicitly as in the following where she says, "I'm very good with the public because I prefer working with them to big stars, even though I love stars and go just as gooey over them as everyone else" (p.16).

Whilst facilitating presenters' will to ordinariness, subsidiary circulation can also interrogate their claims, and it must be noted here that Duncan demonstrates a certain amount of cynicism during his report of the interview. He says that Black's public mostly adores her because "they sense you are so normal, even though you had a nose job 25 years ago and have a fortune of £12 million" (p.15). And that, "I wonder how she has managed to keep her own accent so long, now she's a gracious-living, glorified southerner. 'You have to work hard to lose your accent, as an adult,' explains Bobby" [her husband and manager] (p.16). And when she talks about her "hurr" Duncan provides a bracketed translation for readers [hair]. Duncan's attitude suggests scepticism that Black's image may no longer be genuine, but that she is giving a performance. The notion of performing an image will be further discussed later.

However, as illustrated by the discussion of personal, family matters in the magazine interview with presenter Cilla Black, broadcasting's presenters cultivate a sense of intimacy. It is through such intimacy that broadcasting's institutions appear to reduce the distance between themselves and their viewers. Although focusing on television rather than the media in general, this is a central point made by Langer (1981). He writes in particular about the role of talk shows in television's search for intimacy, presenting interviews as places set aside within the flow of television "where intimacy itself can be both the form and substance of programming" (p.360). In the informal context of the talk show, the host (a television personality) and guest engage in 'chat', during the course of which the guest is encouraged to become incorporated into television's personality system by disclosing their 'personality'. In the case of guests who are already "personalities", what is on offer is the revealing of their own "real" personality. Langer writes that talk shows:

> provide a special setting for personal disclosure where guests appear to be showing us their 'real' selves . . . where we can see them as they 'really are', which in the end after all, as these programmes set out to illustrate, is just like us, 'ordinary folks'. (p.361)

Talk shows appear to allow guests to speak for themselves, and talking for yourself like this individuates you, makes you a personality, and/or confirms your personality. As Tolson (1985, p.25) suggests, the chat in chat shows is a demonstration of "personality".

Langer also stresses the fact that seeing the disclosure take place *before our very eyes* makes the personal intimately and immediately present in a way that an interview in a magazine, for example, would not be. Furthermore, through close-up shots of the face the disclosure effect is intensified, thus generating an even greater sense of the intimate and immediate. Overall the combination of these techniques in an interview situation gives "the sustained *impression* of intimacy so important for television's personality system" (Langer, 1981, p.362, emphasis in original). Ellis (1992) notes that close-ups are so regularly used in television that they even have their own generic name: "talking heads" (p.131). Producing a face that approximates to normal size, he too believes that television's emphasis on close-ups "generates an equality and even intimacy" (ibid.). Joshua Meyrowitz (1986) adapts the theory of proxemics to an analysis of television. The idea here is that the amount of spatial distance between participants in an interaction affects the intensity of their responses. Referring to "para-proxemics", Meyrowitz suggests that, "the way in which a person is framed may suggest an interpersonal distance between that person and the viewer" (p.257). Thus when viewers see a person on television in a close-up shot, they are positioned to respond to the idea of intimacy.

Although the form of chat show that dominated in the 1980s, such as *Wogan*, is no longer popular as a genre and has for the most part been replaced, television is able to incorporate such interviews and similar sites of personal disclosure (and thus the search for intimacy) into other genres as a routine part of its discourse. For example, a lot of the content of a daytime magazine programme such as *This Morning*, which is organised around chat, is concerned with revealing personal information and intimate disclosures.

In his talk of television's intimacy, Langer (1981) goes on to highlight the fact that this medium utilizes direct address. Television presenters' use of direct address to position viewers and to encourage them to respond reciprocally will be discussed in detail in Part Two of this thesis.

Foregrounding Intimacy and Accessibility

While not quite as intimately and immediately intense as on television, it must however be acknowledged that there is much space in other media for personal disclosures. The role played by subsidiary material both in keeping a personality's profile high and in providing public access to that personality is vital, and cannot be underestimated. Taylor and Mullan (1986) argue that, contrary to the general view that tabloid coverage of television is secondary to what occurs on the screen, "increasingly the relationship seems more symbiotic than parasitic" (p.171). They note the assumption by stars and personalities that their biographies should be in the public domain.

The coverage of broadcasting personalities in the popular press is dominated by attention to their private lives. Their "real" lives, their scandals, and tragedies are covered exhaustively. Subsidiary forms of circulation all tend to focus on the personal sphere and presenters are encouraged to talk about themselves. Press reports and photographs in tabloid newspapers, and interviews in magazines, in particular, are full of personal disclosure. Such intimacies are revealed as, "I ran after boys at discos, but when it came to sex, I waited until I was 18." This headlined Andrew Duncan's (1997, July 12-18) interview with Zoë Ball in the respectable *Radio Times*. It turns out that she lost her virginity with someone she "liked a lot and went out with for a year" (p.18). In this normalising interview Ball also modestly dismisses the claim by a music magazine that she is "the sexiest chick on TV" as rubbish, insisting that if they saw her first thing in the morning they'd laugh. It is also common in magazines that we see inside celebrities' houses. A *You* magazine inside story, for instance, gave readers an extremely detailed tour of Anthea Turner's new home (Barber, 1997, May 4). Turner talks at length about a number of items including her aga, sundial, and piano, telling anecdotal stories about each (pp.26-32).

A popular approach taken when feeding the public's appetite for access to the private lives of performers is to present it as gossip. Broadcasting, Scannell (1989) says, provides gossip. He states, "Gossip in broadcasting, gossip about broadcasting in the tabloid press and in ordinary conversation - this is the very stuff of broadcasting's interconnection with so-called private life, or as I prefer, ordinary life" (p.156). Scannell highlights the fact that as the world in broadcasting seems ordinary, relaxed, and sociable, it is accessible, shareable, and communicable for the whole population: Everyone can talk about it.

The result of private disclosure and the gossip surrounding it, along with all the other characteristics of broadcasting's personality system as discussed in this chapter, is that personalities are made accessible to the public. This accessibility, taken to extreme, has resulted in another related modern phenomenon: stalking. Disturbed individuals who are stalkers often select figures from the media as their victims. Professor Paul Mullen, a forensic psychiatrist, states in a Channel 4 programme that, "As long as there are celebrities offering a pseudo-intimacy virtually twenty-four hours a day through television and radio, there are bound to be stalkers" (Periatambee, 1996, October 5).

In a Radio 4 documentary, Gerry Northam (1997, March 1) emphasises what a problem stalking has become for celebrities: for example, a star like Madonna or Cher receives 2000 letters a month, and one quarter of those will be what the experts call inappropriate or odd. This has become such a concern that specialists in America produce dossiers on dangerous stalkers. The programme uses the example of author Stephen King who has three or four regular stalkers and employs a detective to give him detailed accounts about the lives of those people. He even receives information about one woman's menstrual cycle so he knows when she poses most threat. Herbert Gans (1977) analysed all letters sent to NBC's *Nightly News* and its anchorman John Chancellor during October 1975. Altogether there were 351 letters, but just nine people wrote nineteen percent of these, with two people each having written over twenty (p.86). Gans notes that one woman wrote to John Chancellor nearly every day. Seven of the nine people who wrote more than one letter wrote letters that were difficult to understand or were incomprehensible (p.87). Gans sees these findings as reflecting the fact that the media and its figures "function as outlets" for people who are lonely, isolated, and disturbed (p.90).[16]

When presenter Jill Dando was killed, in the absence of concrete evidence, the fact that she might have been murdered by a stalker was one of the first possibilities considered. The *Daily Mail* even featured an article by consultant psychiatrist Raj Persaud (1999, April 27) looking "inside the mind of the stalkers" (p.7). Until Dando's murder, most high profile stalking cases related to major stars. However, what is very interesting for the point about the accessibility of broadcasting's presenters is Northam's (1997, March 1) claim that the celebrity who attracts stalkers is more likely to be a local personality than a big star. According to Northam, the most stalked celebrity is said to be Olivia Newton John. Her image is "the girl-next-door" - as an ordinary girl she could be your girlfriend - and as a result she attracts more and worse stalkers than Madonna or Cher. Obviously the vast majority of viewers do not become stalkers, but this example is indicative of the fact that the more down-to-earth and normal the personality, the easier it is for audiences to relate to them: a point reiterated throughout this chapter.

Conclusion to Section 1

In this section it has been explained that, consumed in a domestic setting, broadcasting is part of everyday life and it is in this routine context that broadcasting's personality system operates. As such it is intimate and familiar and, having learnt to align itself with the conditions of reception, addresses audiences in the ordinary voice of everyday life: an informal, conversational style, spontaneous, relaxed, and personal in character. This social dialogue is implemented by presenters who are personalities. These personality presenters, giving their identity to the programmes they present, provide a way for broadcasting institutions to capture and connect with viewers and listeners. The importance, centrality, and power of personalities have been stressed. Through regular

and predictable appearances presenters become familiar and establish their personae, which, encountered repeatedly and reliably, become knowable. This is heightened when they are regarded as genuine and natural. According to professional ideology, good presenters relate to audiences by "being themselves".

Another important point to which focus was given in this section is the fact that presenters are better accepted when they appear to be ordinary, down-to-earth, and homely. Broadcasting tries to give us presenters who are "just like us" or "one of us": representative, typical, and normalized. Furthermore, broadcasting's personality system gives the impression of intimacy. Foregrounding the private sphere from which personal disclosures are made, personalities seem accessible to the public. The important role of subsidiary forms of circulation in this process has been highlighted. In conclusion it is stressed that at the heart of broadcasting's personality system is the desire to relate to audiences. (Just exactly how audience members relate to presenters will be considered in detail in Part Two of the thesis where their experiences of broadcasting's personality system are investigated.)

In the discussion thus far, whilst elaborating, the theory has been confirmed. The evidential material offered has supported the academic arguments outlined. However it must be acknowledged that the debate about the personality system has been developing over 20 years in ways that will be considered in subsequent sections. Tolson (1996), for instance, applies the concept of "persona" to the broadcasting personality and interrogates the notion of their sincerity. The personality system has itself changed since Langer's article was published in 1981, intensifying as the number of personality presenters has proliferated. The fact that professional personalities operate as

commodities in an increasingly competitive marketplace is considered in Chapter Two. However first, as this thesis has been discussing the nature of presenters in general and has as yet made no distinction between different types, this is the subject attended to in the next section.

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[1]It is worth briefly noting that a similar distinction could be made between theatre and television. The contrast between the realms of the spectacular and the familiar, which they and their performers represent respectively, is summed up neatly in the following anecdote. Mary Malcolm, an early television announcer, tells of an occasion when she and actress Valerie Hobson were walking down Knightsbridge together. A lady approaching stopped in front of them and said, "Hello Mary!", then, "It is Miss Hobson isn't it?". As they walked on Valerie said, "There you are. That's what the orchestra pit does for you. That's the difference." (Robinson, 1986, November 18).

[2]Jackie Stacey (1991) investigated the ways in which female spectators identified with film stars and discovered that the relationship between film star and audience is largely one based on difference. Her subjects reinforced the "otherness" of the stars and talked about the gap between actresses and themselves (p.150). Stacey asserts that this relates to the cinematic context. However spectators were also engaged in processes which involved producing similarity (e.g., transforming their appearance to resemble the star), and Stacey points out that these identifications took place in the more familiar domestic context (p.160).

[3]Gunter and Svennevig also calculate that less than one in three homes are "family households" in what might be considered the traditional sense (i.e., parents with children at school).

[4]Wilson stresses however that there is always a distance between the life-worlds of implied and real viewers (p.34).

[5]Furthermore, the accent adopted by the BBC was Received Pronunciation, which, considered to be "the best kind of English", was, under Reith, assumed to be the only socially acceptable or right way for announcers to speak: even though RP was spoken by only about three percent of the British population (McCrum, MacNeil, & Cran, 1992, p.16). In a Radio 4 programme (made for the BBC's 75th anniversary) charting the rise of "real" voices on the airwaves, presenter Andy Kershaw says of early broadcasting that, "Nation may have been speaking peace unto nation, but the nation was barely capable of speaking unto itself" (Thomas, 1997, October 18). Archive recording played in this documentary demonstrates that even as late as 1952 ordinary working class people could not understand what these apparently aloof and patronising radio presenters were saying. The resulting situation is one of extreme awkwardness and embarrassment for all involved. Many listeners could not relate to the institution when it was authoritarian and paternalist. In a programme for Radio 3, early radio announcer Patricia Hughes admits that it is embarrassing to listen to her broadcasts now. She

describes them as sounding "like an elocution lesson" and understands that her "posh" voice does not work now because it seems affected and snooty to modern ears: she admits that it has "had its day" ("Between the ears," 1998, May 16).

Indeed Scannell (1989) also points out that material recorded from the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s sounds awkward and stilted to our contemporary ears. Of course it must be remembered that forms of talk have changed as much in real life as in broadcasting since then, and hence language from that period sounds unnatural to us now anyway, but Scannell believes that broadcasting itself has had a part to play in changing the communicative ethos of modern society (p.148). Nowadays talk generally seems much more relaxed, natural, and spontaneous than it was forty years ago.

[6]Ad-libs are described as interpolations by Montgomery (1986). His work on DJ talk is discussed in Chapter Four.

[7]It seems rather surprising then for Goffman to state that announcing ordinarily sustains a relatively "formal" style, one that is, he says, "characteristic of public addresses, not intimate conversation" (p.242). This claim is based on his realisation that the fresh talk of informal conversation and the simulated fresh talk in announcing, while similar on the surface and heard as the same, are structurally different underneath (p.322). He explains that everyday speech production is full of faults, imperfections, interruptions, minor break-downs, self-corrections, changes in footing and voice, and so on. However in "real" informal talk speakers are allowed a considerable margin of error and many minor faultables are disattended or even go unnoticed by listeners. According to Goffman, it is such liberty and flexibility that defines informal talk (p.323). He shows that these liberties and flexibilities are not extended to broadcast talk, and that the "work" of announcers is nearly always unfaultable anyway. However it should be foregrounded that, while it may technically be the case that announcing can be distinguished as more formal in structure than everyday speech, audiences' perceptions are of broadcast talk as predominantly informal. This thesis is in agreement with Scannell (1991) who says that while talk on radio and television is public, broadcasting tries to "approximate to the norms not of public forms of talk, but to those of ordinary, informal conversation" (p.3).

[8]For instance, writing in *The Guardian*, Dr Glenn Wilson (1999, June 25) claims that Terry Wogan has essentially become the personification of the BBC. It has also been said that Richard Dimbleby was BBC television (Root, 1986, p.86).

[9]Writing about American talks shows and the important role played by their hosts, Jane Shattuc (1997) says that:

> The most obvious sign of the hosts' centrality was that not only their names but their first names serve as the shows' short-hand titles. The friendly first-name basis invited belief in an intimate access to host and her or his personality. A common technique was to have the opening logo appear as the host's signature. (p.55)

[10]Presenters themselves are aware of this identification. Judy Finnigan and Richard Madeley, for example, are fiercely proud of *This Morning*, the programme they have

presented for more than a decade. As Finnigan exclaimed, "We feel very identified with it. If you slag it off, you slag us off" (Duncan, 1996, May 25-31, p.16). Recently there has been a move to format ownership with presenters such as Noel Edmonds and Chris Evans deciding that if they are going to be inextricably linked with a programme, then they want to own the programme that they are appearing on. Realising their worth in the success of a show, and working in a business environment, they want rights and a fair deal. Noel Edmonds is the founder director and owner of the production company Unique Broadcasting. His company owns *Noel's House Party* (although it is a BBC production). Unique Broadcasting is also now the largest provider of independent radio programming in the UK (Tulloh, 1998, August 30).

[11]Lest there should remain any doubt about the importance and centrality of television's presenters, Wyatt concludes his lecture by looking to the future and arguing that they will remain viewers' main criterion for selecting a station as the choice of channels widens. Already audiences are fragmenting across an increasing number of channels and will continue to do so. The implications of this for television presenters are, suggests Wyatt, that, "Magisterial presenters will be more difficult to grow, their shadows will fall less comprehensively across the public. But warm human contact with viewers will be even more at a premium." He says that as viewers flick through channels:

> what's likely to encourage them to stay a while more than the face of one they know and like and trust. And with so many outlets competing for attention, it will be the presenters who still epitomise the values which distinguish broadcasters in the minds of viewers, which signal to the public this is who we are, this is what we stand for.

[12]It should be noted that this practice can be seen as far back as the early 1950s. According to Andy Medhurst (1991), Gilbert Harding, the biggest name on television at that time, always denied that his persona was anything other than his true self. Harding insisted that the legendary rudeness he displayed on television was not an act or an affectation, but was his genuine personality, and was, therefore, the way he behaved off-screen. Medhurst states that:

> . . . Harding's whole argument, repeated *ad infinitum* in interview after interview, was that there was no difference at all. He was the way he was, on television or off, and if people were shocked by his actions and outbursts then they had no reason to be. They had seen him on TV, they ought to know what he was like. (p.63)

Clearly then, although television was relatively new and still a novelty, the crucial issue of the "role" versus the "real" was already established.

[13]Note how Finnigan refers to her own biography. Regular viewers of *This Morning* must surely have acquired a lot of knowledge about the programme's hosts. Such knowledge is important because it makes the presenters "knowable" to their audience. Interestingly Finnigan also refers to Gaby Roslin (who is absent) by her first name only; suggesting both she, Ball, and the viewers at home are on first name terms with the presenter.

[14]Margaret Morse (1985) refers to a style of presentation used in some US talk shows in which "the host and viewer enjoy a collusive relationship of 'us' versus 'those celebrities' (which become the butt of wry looks 'shared' between host and viewer)" (p.10).

[15]It is also now usual that presenters have a regional accent and the voices of people from throughout the UK are represented. As indicated earlier, this took a long time in coming: for example, a memo from the BBC Head of Presentation: Sound, dated 4th April 1963, contained the following:

> It has been accepted that it is desirable in selecting announcers to break away from the long established principle of the university and public school voice and lean more towards the red brick form of speech. It is clear that if that policy is to be adopted and pursued, then we must also accept deviations from standard southern English. ("Between the ears," 1998, May 16)

[16]As a result of the number, the content, and the nature of the letters they write, all of which make them stand out, Gans notes that it is often taken (by journalists for example) that people who write to broadcasters are generally "nuts" and "crackpots". Bernadette McGuire and David LeRoy (1977) stress otherwise. In their study of audience mail, they conclude that most people who contact the media are far from socially deviant. In fact according to McGuire and LeRoy, "Overall, the image is of an individual who is not alienated and is often engaged in other kinds of citizen action" (p.84).

Section 2: Genre and Personality

In the first section of this chapter it was argued that the basis of broadcasting's personality system is the need to relate to audiences. Langer (1981) highlights the fact that presenters both give identity to and exist as identities within the programmes they front. Whilst this occurs to some extent in all programmes, this point will be developed by acknowledging that the degree to which a persona's on-air personality is evident, and the nature it takes, vary depending on programme type. Clearly different genres require their presenters to carry out different tasks and to fulfil different roles. Genre determines the form and style of presentation adopted, and thus the appropriateness of certain personae. With this in mind, the focus of this section is on differentiating between types of presenter and the significance of personality for each. The discussion draws on Taylor and Mullan (1986). They suggest that while the personality and integrity of presenters throughout the medium is important to viewers, its nature differs across and even within genres. The following discussion begins by outlining what they say about three types of presenter - the chat show host, game show presenter, and news reader - before going on to develop the argument.

Taylor and Mullan apply their concept of "pure personality" to chat show hosts (p.69). As discussed in the previous section, pure personality presenters are those who are apparently simply "being themselves". In the case of chat shows, hosts interview guests while seemingly doing little more than being themselves. Here the personality of the presenter is central to the programme.

Taylor and Mullan claim that game show hosts are not pure personality to the same extent because although they have a central role in the programmes they present, the genre is less centred around their personality than is the case with chat shows (p.83). Because they have certain tasks to carry out, such as enthusing and winding up the participants, and in dealing with the rules and the running of the game, there is less opportunity for game show hosts to engage in "personality play". It is really only during banter with contestants that the host can reveal his personality. Taylor and Mullan acknowledge that some shows provide more occasions for this than others. They suggest that *Blankety Blank* involves "personality" more than most of its contemporaries. In programmes like *The Krypton Factor* or *The Price is Right*, the presenters (Gordon Burns and Leslie Crowther) play a fairly anonymous role.

Yet personality is still important. Taylor and Mullan report that when the viewers in their study were asked to evaluate game show hosts, Bruce Forsyth was the clear winner. He was regarded as the host who was the most genuinely enthusiastic and who most enjoys doing his job (p.86). The authors highlight the fact that *Play Your Cards Right* (the show he was presenting at that time) provides lots of space for Forsyth to verbally interact with the contestants, and that his popularity reflects this opportunity. It is also, they say, an indication that the words he speaks and views he expresses sound as though they are his own rather than those of the scriptwriters. [In relation to television comedians, Taylor and Mullan found that viewers were reluctant to accept that scriptwriters were most probably the source of the jokes performed by their favourite comedian (p.142).] Game show host Bob Monkhouse scored well too on all the measures, however viewers' opinions of him varied from "a nice, genuine man" to "he is

oily" (p.85). Obviously though audience members felt they knew his personality, whether they liked it or not.

Taylor and Mullan also consider the news reader. They claim that the news is certainly not impersonal, and that this is because of the news readers presenting it. Despite the fact that they are confined within the rigid format of the news broadcast which provides even less opportunity for personality play than most genres, Taylor and Mullan found that the personality of the news reader was a topic of great interest for viewers. In fact they state that, "Over and over again the personality of the news reader emerged as the most interesting feature of the bulletin" (p.93). They point out that even the issue of bias became personalised. Viewers seemed to believe they could judge the political views of the person reading the news and that this might determine whether they thought the news was biased to the right-wing or left-wing (p.97).[1]

Although discussion group members in Taylor and Mullan's study gave priority to the news readers' personalities before considering the treatment of the news, they were certain that "personality" ought to be subdued - definitely not inflated - in news broadcasts. It was felt that the personality of the news reader should not take over from the job and news readers seen as the "most anxious to put over their own personalities" were criticised (p.98). Viewers did not seem to think that a news reader's personality should be cultivated beyond the news genre either (p.95). For example, members of the discussion group voiced the opinion that it is difficult to take Angela Rippon seriously when she has been dancing on the comedy programme, the *Morecombe and Wise Show* (their 1976 Christmas Show). It is clear that an appearance "outside their area" can

detract from as well as adding to (or leaving untouched) the reputation of well-known figures.

Taylor and Mullan's work prepares the ground for the "mapping" of different categories of personalities, which will be developed here. A key issue they highlight is the varying amount of space different genres make available for the personality of the presenter.

This thesis proposes that the idea of presenting as oneself (albeit the televisual version of oneself) is widespread, covering programmes from most genres. It is an approach evident in most talk or discussion shows, magazine programmes, some light-entertainment shows, and some factual series (e.g., *This Morning*, *Changing Rooms*, and *Holiday*). It predominates in programmes that are characterised by chat. Here the presenters, who are primarily communicators, have plenty of opportunity for conversation with others appearing on the programme and for direct address to the audience. Their tone is informal, they appear spontaneous (even if reading scripted material), and, when live, make mistakes. There is, as a result, much space in these programmes for the personality of the presenter - a personality which is seemingly their own - and thus viewers can come to know them. These presenters are the people who, by appearing simply to be themselves, seem down-to-earth and ordinary, and are the most like neighbours or kin.[2]

This situation is slightly different for programmes, like quiz shows or panel games, where the presenter also has to be entertaining. They have to perform the role of "being funny" in addition to, or instead of, "being themselves". Game show hosts are often comedians and, as such, will perform a comedy routine at the start of the programme.

They may appear in stand-up or their own stage shows outside television: Jim Davidson, host of *The Generation Game* and *Big Break*, is a good example here. These compères can be thought of as multi-talented "entertainers" and distinguished from presenters who are "communicators" (whose talent is simply to be themselves). Des O'Connor and Michael Barrymore, for example, fall into the former category: Desmond Lynam and Esther Rantzen into the latter. The format of ITV's *Des O'Connor Tonight* show, for instance, provides space for O'Connor to perform a stand-up comedy routine as well as to interview guests with whom he may also sing.

Then there are presenters who have expert knowledge or a specialised skill of some sort. This makes them less like an "ordinary" member of the public (as represented by the communicator). Usually presenters relate to viewers by "being normal", but in this case where normalcy is not appropriate, eccentricity is often used to avoid alienating audiences from serious or expert subjects which could otherwise be intimidating. British television has a unique tradition of eccentric presenters. In a programme taking a light-hearted look at this subject, Clive James (1997, October 16) explains that when television first started recruiting experts (i.e., people who were educating or informing the audience in some way), "it helped if they were kind of weird because it made their superiority less daunting". He claims that the success of Fanny Craddock, the eccentric presenter of cookery programmes, provided an important lesson for television executives, which they carried over into other factual genres. On the *Tonight* programme for example, with reference to reporter Fyffe Robertson, James says it was realised that, "Even for a straight reporter delivering straight info, a few weirdo mannerisms would help rivet the audience's attention."

As James points out, programmes on subjects like science simply would not keep a mass audience glued to the screen unless the presenter him/herself was fascinating too. This applies not only to science buffs like Magnus Pyke or Patrick Moore, but also to anyone transmitting expertise: such as dog trainer Barbara Woodhouse. James remarks that, as in the case of a nature expert like David Bellamy, it has been "proved that if the people on the screen knew more than you did, their info was easier to swallow if they looked and sounded off the wall." He concludes that the British tradition of the "wacko", "fruitcake", and "zany" expert presenter is firmly established.[3]

Though these characters are not what might be considered representative, typical, or "just like everyone else" (the fact they often have upper class accents and may be amateurs contributes to this), they are not at all glamorous, remote, or star-like either. Furthermore, the performance they give (albeit eccentric) is that of themselves and, as with other communicators, it is therefore vital that they are perceived to be authentic. In his lecture, Wyatt (1996) spends some time discussing those presenters who might be termed "expert". Some presenters by their personalities, he says, "induce the audience into sharing their own passions." He praises presenters such as David Bellamy and Patrick Moore for (what he believes to be) their genuine passion:

> We all curl with embarrassment or loathing do we not, when we spot someone whipping up an impression of enthusiasm, acting passionate, or worse still impersonating eccentricity? The epitome of charm, of whole-hearted engagement with and love of his subject, is David Attenborough. He enjoys performing, but he's performing himself. His eyes are alight when he discourses on the natural world on television because his eyes are alight when he talks about birds, or animals, or plants in the office or across the table. The natural world bewitches him and he wants it to bewitch us too.

Taylor and Mullan (1986) confirm that viewers have admiration for David Attenborough, claiming that he was the only television presenter not to receive a single criticism in all their discussions with audience members. One viewer is quoted as saying:

> JIM (41): What makes it for me is that Attenborough is simply obsessed with animals. At the beginning it was a part-time interest. But now it's completely taken him over. He goes everywhere for years and years. His whole heart and soul are in it. He is genuinely still surprised. (p.62)

Taylor and Mullan go on to suggest that obsessiveness, an abiding curiosity (to the point of being a little crazy), and zeal to convert others are the qualities many viewers look for in the television expert. They report that the possession of these characteristics has also made Patrick Moore an admirable television figure.

Having said that eccentricity is a common quality in television experts, it is necessary to note that there are also many specialist presenters who are "normal" and down-to-earth: the crucial difference is that they are dealing with issues of an intimate, personal, or domestic kind, and it is therefore important that viewers can feel comfortable with them. In mind here are experts like those who appear on *This Morning*: Chris Steele (GP), Denise Robertson (agony aunt), Raj Persaud (psychiatrist), Monty Don (gardener), Graham Turner (chef); or Dr Hilary Jones who appears on *GMTV*. However these personalities are not quite presenters - most of them guest on other people's programmes - and they are all professionals in their own fields outside television.

There are an increasing number of people who are prominent in other fields before becoming presenters. Sportsmen and women, in particular, are taking up presenting either following their own sporting career or while still competing: Jeremy Guscott (*Gladiators*), Sue Barker (*A Question of Sport*), Kriss Akabussi (*Record Breakers*), Sharron Davies (*The Big Breakfast*), Gary Lineker (*Gary Lineker's Golden Boots*). Footballer Ian Wright has recently presented his own series of chat shows on ITV, *Friday Night's All Wright*. Politicians are turning to presenting too. Edwina Currie, for example, presented *Espresso* on Channel 5 (a show about consumer issues), and *Menu from Heaven* on ITV (a six-part series exploring the links between cookery and religion). None of these people are quite pure personality (i.e., known for being themselves) because they are better known for their role in their own field.

While it is necessary that some personalities cultivate their personae extensively and they become cross-media figures, for other presenters this cultivation is limited. As has been previously mentioned, news readers in particular must subdue their personality and retain authority to some extent because otherwise they risk losing their audience's respect. At the furthest end of the spectrum from pure personality are the impersonal, out-of-vision voices of continuity announcers who are never even identified by name. Ed Buscombe (1984, p.130) refers to the "disembodied voice" of BBC announcers who are heard but never seen. However he also discusses the fact that on ITV announcers did in the past appear in vision, making direct eye contact, and addressing the viewer personally "in the flesh"; and thus giving audiences the warm humanity of real people. This approach is still used by ITV in its Grampian, Border, and Ulster regions.[4] One announcer on UTV in particular, Julian Simmons, has become a well-known celebrity in Northern Ireland.

In the previous section of this chapter the point was made that the skill involved is not apparent when personalities appear simply to be "being themselves". The best presenters make their job look effortless. Terry Wogan himself has said that, "The fact is that anyone can do television, if they have enough nerve. You know, it's not brain surgery" (Selway, 1994, February 20). However the move along the spectrum away from pure personality seems to be partly related to apparent skill: where skill is more obviously involved, the less the presenters are our televisual surrogates. This is reflected in findings from the national survey reported by Taylor and Mullan (1986). They asked the 3000 people in their sample whether news reading was one of the jobs which they thought they would be able to manage on television: 84 per cent declared it would be beyond them (p.96). Viewers are even more modest about their potential role as a comedian: 89 per cent believed that they would not be able to tell jokes successfully on television (p.144).

Taylor and Mullan also make the important claim that dissipation of appeal is characteristic of the pure personality because in putting their individuality on the line, they make themselves particularly vulnerable to public taste (p.70). With television presenters it is often a case of "love them or hate them": the personalities who please some will irritate others. Some personalities are well known for being irritants (e.g., Jeremy Beadle, Tony Blackburn, Timmy Mallett, Jimmy Hill, and Anthea Turner). David Lusted (1984, p.73) notes that the popularity of any one personality can also rise and fall repeatedly. Terry Wogan, one of the longest-serving broadcasting personalities, is a good example here. As Head of BBC TV's Light Entertainment, David Liddiment said of Wogan's return to television following the demise of his chat show, "Anybody who is on TV three times a week gets taken for granted by the audience and the BBC.

That phase is now over. He has a real contribution to make" (Selway, 1994, February 20). Wogan also returned to BBC radio. Whilst for some popularity is short-lived because the fashion changes, for others, like Wogan, their career manages to span decades. In Wogan's case he has managed to continue without altering his personality or his way of "being himself". It is possible for presenters to mature and develop over time, but it is difficult for them to change.

It may be possible for some presenters to reinvent themselves but this is recognised as a tricky business. It has, for example, been said that Kirsty Young has completely reinvented herself, and has done so successfully. According to Harriet Lane (1997, November 9) in *The Observer*, Young's move from Scotland, where she co-presented the lunchtime news and her own chat show on STV, marked a turning point in her public persona. Following harsh media scrutiny and now presenting the news on Channel 5, the "old-style 'fluffy' Kirsty" metamorphosised into a "coolly aloof screen goddess" (ibid.). The case study in Chapter Three reports Phillip Schofield's less positively reported "reinvention" of himself.

It has been reiterated that affinity is most strongly felt with those "ordinary" presenters who make a virtue of their "normality" and who are "being themselves" as the surrogate of their potential audience members. Yet clearly many different types of people are presenters: some viewers will connect with, others they will not. This is an obvious but important point. Cilla Black, for example, may be like "one of us" for many of her regular viewers, but for other audiences this is certainly not so. They may feel she is nothing like them, and in fact she may alienate them further from the popular programmes she presents. These viewers may see their surrogate in a factual presenter

like Sue Cook, Philippa Forrester, or Anne Robinson. Others will recognise some self-resemblance in light-entertainment's Fern Britton, Carol Smillie, or Dani Behr. It is the task of the programme-makers to match the presenter to the audience their programme will be popular with: to find a presenter who will appeal to the majority of the potential audience. Both genre and channel are crucial factors here. Obviously current affairs and factual series call for a very different personality type than light-entertainment and youth programming. The same is the case with channels and stations, such as Radio 4 and Radio 1.

It could be suggested that - somewhat related to genre and channel - class is crucially involved here. Individual viewers certainly single out some presenters as preferred, and their choice is a reflection of their class position. Writing in the 1980s, Lusted suggests Michael Parkinson, David Frost, and Selina Scott as examples of presenters who represent the middle classes. However Lusted (1984) concentrates on three personalities - Tommy Cooper, Diana Dors, and Eric Morecombe - whom he claims embody working class experience, and he shows how they offer a bond of recognition to their working class audiences. Although like most personalities they appeal to majority audiences, the potential social meaning of any personality will vary for each faction of the audience. Lusted (1998) also discusses the populist appeal for working class viewers of particular presenters and shows within light entertainment: such as Cilla Black and her programme *Surprise Surprise*.

Just as they represent different social classes, as far as gender is concerned, both sexes seem to be evenly represented quantitatively by broadcasting's presenters. However it was not always so: for example, in the book *The Media Mob* written in 1980, George

Melly provides observations for caricatures drawn by Barry Fantoni of familiar faces from television: those described as "your friends and mine" (Fantoni & Melly, 1980, p.7). Out of the 63 household names included, only four are women (Angela Rippon, Anna Ford, Joan Bakewell, and Esther Rantzen). The situation now is very different and there are many female presenters.

The way in which some female presenters are represented may still be problematic however.[5] Of particular concern here is the controversial image and style adopted by - or given to - many young, female presenters: as voiced by journalist Amy Raphael (1995, March 19). In her article Raphael highlights the fact that the young, blonde, female presenters of popular culture television shows are not taken seriously; in particular they are judged on their appearance. She makes the point that while men control the media, it is this type of female presenter, "the blonde babe" stereotype, who will continue to have the high profile, the success, and the attention. Presenters here include Ulrika Jonnson, Mariella Frostrup, and Amanda de Cadenet. Raphael says of Mariella Frostrup, "her easy-on-the-eye looks, instant 'blonde babe' appeal and bubbly, uncontroversial persona make her eminently employable and easily marketable, whether she likes it or not" (p.32). Mariella Frostrup herself declares, "I'm blonde and in my 30s. I'm a commodity" (ibid.). The idea of presenters as commodities is one returned to in the next chapter of this thesis.

The issue of race representation is also a problem. According to the Office for National Statistics (1999), in 1997 just under 94% of the population of Great Britain categorised themselves as "white", while 3.6 million people described themselves as belonging to another ethnic group (p.114). However there are very few black presenters: Trevor

McDonald and Moira Stuart (both news readers) are perhaps the best known. Diane-Louise Jordan (an ex-*Blue Peter* presenter who now works on *Songs of Praise*), Mr Motivator (a personality keep-fit instructor who appeared on *GMTV*), chef Ainsley Harriott (presenter of *Can't Cook Won't Cook*), and Wesley Kerr (a reporter on *Watchdog*) are relatively familiar personalities, but there are few besides. Lenny Henry presents the BBC's *Comic Relief* appeal, but he is primarily known as a comedian and actor. There are even fewer presenters from other ethnic groups, despite the fact that the Indian group forms the largest of the non-white ethnic groups (Office for National Statistics, 1999, p.114). Krishnan Guru-Murthy presents *Channel 4 News*, Rajesh Mirchandani occasionally fronts BBC2's *The O Zone*; but neither is well known. Television's personality system is most definitely almost exclusively white. Indeed, Niki Strange (1998, p.309) notes that "within the context of white-dominated television presentation", Madhur Jaffrey - presenter of the cookery programme *Madhur Jaffrey's Flavours of India* - is marked by her ethnicity.

Concerned with portrayals of race and how television presents itself in a multi-cultural society, Beattie, Khan, and Philo (1999) investigated the medium's "public face". The public face of television was accessed according to who is employed to present its programmes. Their study involved examining in detail the content of two weeks' television in order to "ascertain the proportional representation of non-white ethnic minorities on screen, as presenters and hosts, across the spectrum of television produced by British programme makers" (p.150). They divided their sample into 25 programme-with-presenter types and discovered that fifteen of these contained white presenters exclusively. Their findings indicate, therefore, the "extraordinarily 'white' nature of such programming" (p.151). Beattie et al. note that there are many black entertainers

who appear and perform on programmes, but few presenters. Their results show that in some areas of television there has apparently been a policy of recruiting non-white presenters: most obviously in children's television, education, and news (p.152). However they also point out that in the ten programme categories they identified as having presenters from ethnic minorities, appearing in minor roles alongside white hosts, black and Asian people were not always the main presenters (p.153). Beattie et al. conclude that, "Overall this study shows the subordinate role of ethnic minorities in the public face of TV" (p.154).

While for some genres on some channels most audience members will find a presenter they can connect with, it is also important to note that some audiences may choose not to relate to presenters at all, preferring a more impersonal approach. Taylor and Mullan (1986) mention the interesting case of Radio 3 and explain that, dedicated to classical music, this is a minority station whose audience is mainly middle class, male, over fifty-five, and resident in the Southeast of England. They say that regular Radio 3 listeners often seem to regard the very lack of "personality" presenters as a reason to tune to this station and that, "In these circumstances it becomes a compliment to be able to say of the broadcasters: 'They are not really there at all.'" (p.169). Of course, for others this is a subject of criticism and they find Radio 3's approach too distant and anonymous for their taste. Cited in a special report on Radio 3 by BBC Audience Research from May 1984, as one less regular listener explains:

> The type of voice is very similar to what's used on BBC TV if somebody's died . . . Always solemn . . . And the pauses at the end of the thing. You always get a great long pause so people can go 'Mmm, wasn't that good' or something. (ibid.)

Roland White (1999, May 29-June 4), radio columnist in the *Radio Times*, wrote an interesting piece about Radio 3 presenter Petroc Trelawny, whose early-morning programme *On Air* was not being received well by the station's listeners. White claims that Trelawny's problem is his chatty style. Radio 3 listeners do not like his friendly, informal, "chit-chat" approach. White states, "Friendly or not, accessible or not, this is definitely *not* what Radio 3 is all about. . . . [Trelawny] is a good broadcaster, but he has been asked to do the wrong job" (p.129).

Radio 3 is somewhat exceptional in a broadcasting system where intimacy, enthusiasm, and general informality are pervasive. While it might traditionally be thought that on the whole the BBC as an institution speaks with a more authoritative or serious/stuffy voice than its counterparts, Taylor and Mullan propose that audiences do not seem to make a distinction between the tones of the main television channels. When they asked their national sample whether independent television is friendlier than BBC TV, 30 per cent agreed with the statement and 30 per cent disagreed (the rest said they don't know). Having analysed the answers to a series of similar questions, they conclude that the BBC is more or less as "ordinary", "friendly", and "understandable" as its main competitor (p.168).

Conclusion to Section 2

In this section a "map" of different types of personality presenter was developed. The pure personality, such as the chat show host, is the presenter who does not claim any special talent or expertise, but rather simply offers their own personality: the programmes they present provide them with the space to do so. Chapter Three focuses

on the presenter Phillip Schofield who is exemplary of the pure personality type. The situation has been shown to differ according to genre. Game show hosts or news readers, for example, have obvious tasks to perform in addition to being themselves. These tasks more apparently involve skills of some sort and there is less opportunity for the presenters to reveal their own personality. In this section it was recognised that normalcy is not always appropriate in broadcasting's personality system and the eccentric expert was considered as illustration. It was also noted that, trading on their individuality, the pure personality is especially vulnerable to dissipation of appeal and fluctuating popularity. This discussion elaborated the idea that viewers will feel affinity for presenters most like themselves, and therefore, related to channel and genre, certain presenters appeal to and connect with certain audiences. Problems of gender and race representation in the contemporary personality system were briefly acknowledged.

This section ends on the cautionary note that attempts should not be made to categorise presenters too rigidly. One interesting point about some pure personalities is their ability to cross over genres (within limits). Jill Dando, for instance, presented *Crimewatch* and *Holiday* in addition to reading the news. Indeed, as noted by Krishan Kumar (1977, p.243), presenters are flexible and versatile, their skills transferable across a range of different programmes. The fluidity of boundaries is also reflected in the fact that it has been possible for *The National Lottery Show* to be hosted by an entertainer (e.g., Bob Monkhouse) one week and a communicator (e.g., Carol Vorderman) the next.

[1]Gans (1977) reports a similar finding. In his analysis of letters sent to NBC's *Nightly News* and its anchorman John Chancellor, Gans discovered that letters criticizing how the news was covered "generally criticized the anchorman personally, assuming from the news viewers saw that John Chancellor held opinions to which they were opposed and had inserted them into the stories" (p.91). Gans continues that, "almost all writers assumed he was entirely responsible for the content of the Nightly News, and no one wrote to or mentioned the executive producer" (ibid.). Chapter Four refers to a study by Levy (1979) examining the nature of the interaction between newscasters and their audiences.

[2]While much less usual, it must be noted that there are presenters who do not attempt to be natural, but rather give a more obvious, exaggerated performance. For instance, Dale Winton, presenter of *Supermarket Sweep* and *The Other Half*, plays up his camp persona. Lily Savage, also a presenter in light-entertainment, is not a real person but a character portrayed by comic Paul O'Grady. The idea of the playful performance will be considered further later in this chapter.

[3]In a *Radio Times* feature entitled, "Why we're mad about TV eccentrics", Alison Graham (1997, February 22-28) examines the appeal of expert presenters who are "enthusiastic, unconventional - or just plain batty" but who thrive in "sensible" areas of programming. She refers to chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, art-loving nun Sister Wendy Beckett, the *Two Fat Ladies* (cooks Jennifer Paterson and Clarissa Dickson Wright), astronomer Patrick Moore, scientist Magnus Pyke, and botanist David Bellamy.

[4]It would be interesting to learn why these regions (and possibly others) choose this style of presentation and whether it is linked to the nature of the communities they serve.

[5]Gillian Ritch (1999) investigates the importance of image and appearance for Scottish female television presenters. Having interviewed five presenters, a producer, and a station manager, she establishes that it is easier for a woman to break into presentation if she is attractive and of a "normal" height and weight.

Section 3: Performed Sincerity

The first section of this chapter highlighted the broadcasting industry's notion, with regard to its personalities, of "just being yourself" and gave examples of presenters themselves formulating this idea. Here it is stressed that this notion must be interrogated and that it is indeed constantly called into question throughout the media. That this is so is due to an awareness of the construction of personae and the performance of sincerity. The "real" lives and "professional" appearances of presenters are examined, in tabloid newspapers and magazines especially, and are either found to be consistent or are found wanting. The latter may result in a scandal and the end of their career. However either way, as shall be explained, journalistic investigation creates doubt about the real person. This section aims to show that challenging the authenticity of its presenters has somewhat undermined broadcasting's traditional personality system and raises questions about whether this might affect audiences' responses to those who do still hope to be perceived as genuine. Andrew Tolson (1991, 1996) is a key source.

Clearly any appearance in public (or private) involves giving a performance to a certain extent. As Robert Robinson (1986, November 18) says in a documentary on television personalities, "When you present yourself in public the act involves artifice, you offer yourself at your best not your worst." However he continues, "But supposing it isn't yourself you offer? Does the screen give the game away? Can you pretend?" There is disagreement among those who answer Robinson's question. In his work Scannell (1996) takes the position that even if a person appearing in broadcasting is giving a performance, they do put themselves into their performance. He writes about the

performance given by a member of the public during a scripted interaction with the character Harry Hopeful for his regional radio show in 1936. Miss Lomas, Scannell claims, "performs herself as herself . . . she puts herself into her self-performance" (p.36).

Much of watching television and judging a presenter's performance has to do with questions about personal authenticity: in other words, how "real" and "genuine" are these personalities. Tolson explains how what Richard Dyer (1991, p.137) calls the "rhetoric of authenticity" is presently the dominant criterion used to assess media performances (1996, p.127). A performance is felt to be authentic if it demonstrates qualities of sincerity or personal truth - as revealed in an interview for example. Similarly a fan will study texts, looking for those moments of genuineness when the subject of their fandom gives him/herself away, revealing their "real personality" through gestures that seem to be entirely "natural".

James Beniger (1987) is interested in the use of mass communication to influence attitudes and behaviour and he writes that sincerity in media content might be manipulated in order to do so (p.356). What he says about the nature of that sincerity is relevant to this discussion. He reports that a 1946 study examined how radio star Kate Smith managed to sell $39 million in war bonds in one day's broadcasts. The findings pointed to the singer's widely perceived sincerity: her fans trusted her because they believed her to be sincere. Beniger also reports a much more recent survey. In a 1986 *USA Today* poll of "the most believable sports figure endorsing products", John Madden was the overwhelming winner as first choice of 40% of all respondents. His success is explained as follows: "There is something about ex-NFL coach Madden, with his

slightly ruffled hair and mile-a-minute mouth, that reminds viewers of their next-door neighbor" (p.358). The same conclusion had been drawn about supporters of Kate Smith forty years earlier: "They trust her because she belongs to their own stratum. Her alleged sincerity has a social basis - it is a product of her belonging to the in-group. She is kinsfolk" (ibid.). Beniger states that underlying the features of informality, familiarity, homeliness, and accessibility is a common quality: simplicity perceived as sincerity (p.359). Kate Smith's radio presence is described as follows:

> She reminds us that she has no pretensions to grandiosity or highfalutin' ways. As she puts it in her bond drive: "I haven't any stories or fancy phrases to fling at you . . . no sound effects to capture your attention. I'm a plain simple woman." (ibid.)

Of course this is advertising and, as Beniger points out, this perceived sincerity might be a fabrication, "a 'feigning of personal concern' orchestrated by media consultants to manipulate radio audiences" (p.357). Yet crucially it is also recognised that sincerity is the means by which "a mass message might be received with the impact of interpersonal communication" (ibid.). Beniger regards sincerity as a concept for understanding the blurring of interpersonal and mass communication (p.360). He says, "Kate Smith's behaviour encouraged members of a mass audience to treat her as 'a person' and therefore her communication as highly personal" (p.369).

The concept of sincerity is crucial to broadcasting's personality system because, as emphasised by Scannell (1996), sincerity authenticates and mediates intimacy. Presenters appear "as themselves" and we are asked to believe they are doing so sincerely. We are encouraged to assume that there is no discrepancy between the performance they give and the person they are: in other words that they are performing

themselves. Scannell claims that "sincerity is pervasively a performative requirement on radio and television" (p.74) where feigned and artificial performances are rejected: and furthermore, that the presentation of *ordinariness* is genuine. According to Scannell, "Sincerity, we might say, is nowadays one defining characteristic of any person appearing in the public realm who lays claim to ordinariness. It is how you prove you are like the rest of us" (ibid.).

In his chapter devoted to the topic of sincerity, Scannell writes of the music hall star Gracie Fields that her performance was genuine. Affectionately known as "Our Gracie", it is claimed that, "she was herself in public" (p.65). However he writes at greater length about the sincere performance of another singer, Vera Lynn, whose style was very different. Constructing "an intimate one-to-one relationship with listeners", Vera Lynn's sincerity was "embodied in interpersonal intimacy" (ibid.). However, like Fields, Scannell suggests that, "The prevailing public perception of Vera Lynn was that her publicly presented personality and her private life were in harmony with each other" (p.71).

As Scannell points out, the obvious challenge to the claim of sincerity is the search for evidence that might undermine it by revealing pretence: such as a private life that conflicts with the public performance. Subsidiary forms of circulation are concerned with this issue and aim to uncover what the stars are "really like". Lowenthal (1961), who has analysed biographical stories appearing in popular magazines during the first half of the century, reports that, "while it was once rather contemptible to give much room to the private affairs and habits of public figures, the topic is now the focus of interest" (cf. Langer, 1981, p.354).[1]

It can be argued that an intense interest in what people are really like and the attempt to discover a person's true self (which is believed to be in some way concealed) is a general feature of our contemporary society. This "melodramatic philosophy of the person" (Tolson, 1996, p.146; see also Gledhill, 1991) extends to media consumption, so that there has always been public fascination for the true identities of its performers. The following example, a declaration which titled a popular magazine's cover feature, is typical and only one of countless examples: "Revealed at last! The *real* Anthea Turner" (Barber, 1996, March 27, p.13). In this case, just the month before, *Tatler* magazine had run a similar feature: Turner appeared on the front cover with the headline, "The Turner prize: Anthea really is OK... promise" (D'Souza, 1996, February). The journalist who talked with Turner sets the interview up as an attempt to discover the "real" Anthea Turner, to gain insight into her character on behalf of the magazine's readers as it seems to be assumed that this is what they will be most interested in: and she confirms that Turner is genuine. Christa D'Souza says, "Most famous people have two personae, one off screen and one on. The vibes emanating from Anthea this morning are that those two personae are indistinguishable from each other" (p.82). Similarly, she concludes by saying, "After an hour or so (for all the time in the world will not reveal Anthea to be anything other than she appears to be), I make a move to leave . . ." (ibid.).

Even the "personalities" of present day film stars are of interest to the public and the publicity machine ensures that they are not as inaccessible, exceptional, and distant as the stars of classic cinema once were. The "desire of audiences to know the stars that played these characters 'as people', to have access to their 'real' lives, to know what they were 'really like', in short, to know their 'personalities'" (Langer, 1981, p.354) is catered for and encouraged. Tolson (1996, p.126) believes that, as the personalities of film stars

are also of interest, there is a problem in making the distinction between film "star" and television "personality" too rigid.

The key point for this discussion, however, is that questioning the true identity of broadcasting's personalities (as in the Anthea Turner example above) is paradoxical because we are led to believe that it is there for us to see, that it is not being concealed, but that in their very ordinariness these people are simply being themselves. But, as Tolson (1996) points out, the problematic of the interview suggests that their identities cannot simply be taken at face value and that "the TV personality is increasingly perceived to be another kind of constructed persona" (p.131). Like their film star counterparts then, it is suggested that broadcasting presenters have personae. With regard to the film star as a composite structure, Christine Gledhill (1991) says:

> The components I am concerned with here include the 'real person', the 'characters' or 'roles' played by the stars in films and the star's 'persona' which exists independently of real person or film character, combining elements of each in a public 'presence'. (p.214)

Tolson makes it clear that a celebrity's persona is a carefully contrived public self, a construction combining the personality's professional life and personal life (p.133).

Brand and Scannell (1991) assert that a career, which involves performing in public, such as that of a media entertainer, "may involve the projection of a carefully crafted public identity and the maintenance of that identity in and through time. One such class of performers on radio is the disc jockey" (p.203). Concentrating on Tony Blackburn, they argue that he worked hard to create an identity for himself that would make him familiar and popular with radio audiences and that would distinguish him from other

DJs. He also began to talk about his private life on air, thus adding the "real individual" to the "professional personality", and Brand and Scannell claim that as a result, "The dividing line between a professional and personal identity began to erode" (p.205). Talking on his programme, Blackburn regularly draws on his past career (his negative experiences of BBC Radio 1 for example) and his private life (such as his divorce). So his own personal experience features throughout his show and helps listeners to understand his performance: in other words, Blackburn's biography is relevant to his self-projection. This is the Tony Blackburn the audience feels they know. But in view of the above argument, it can be suggested that the contemporary listener may be aware of the construction of this identity and may wonder how like the identity he worked so hard to create is the "real" Tony Blackburn.

To summarise then, in broadcasting many presenters have the image of appearing down-to-earth and ordinary, of being themselves: but perhaps this is an *image* that has been cultivated, "themselves" is a construction. The problematic of the melodramatic interview creates this doubt about the real person. Journalists apply the concept of persona to television personalities and investigate their true identity. Will Self, for example, writes in *The Observer* that, "You can always spot a 'television personality', even when they aren't actually on television, because they carry their 'made-up' persona in front of them, like some sort of baffler, or Ready Brek force field" (1997, March 9).

Tolson (1996) uses Bob Monkhouse as his example, and reports an occasion on which, as a guest on the chat show *Wogan*, Monkhouse reflected self-consciously on his true identity. He told Terry Wogan that entering showbusiness involved inventing a persona: offering something which is not necessarily his true self, but which is, rather, a

construction (p.132). Monkhouse also seems to be saying that Terry Wogan's public personality is to some extent a construction too. However in Monkhouse's case it seems that the construction he offers as himself is not believed to be genuine and he is in fact commonly felt to personify "smarm" - "smarminess" is artificial sincerity. So in other words, his sincerity is perceived to be false because it is obviously performed, it is an act. Yet this is a complicated situation for, as Tolson (1991) notes, "somehow Monkhouse appears as an even more authentic and sincere personality ('the real Bob') in so far as he admits that his television personality is a sham" (p.186).

Similarly, in an interview in *The Guardian*, television presenter Nick Hancock is reportedly "frantically keen to point out the artifice of his abusive television persona" (Garfield, 1997, October 25), claiming he is very seldom rude in real life because he is too nervous and shy. Indeed, the journalist interviewing Hancock describes him as "preposterously polite" and also notes that he does seem "to represent something of the common man". Thus in admitting his television persona is artificial, Nick Hancock in fact enhances the "genuine" persona he presents in subsidiary circulation.

The end of the 1980s saw the falling popularity of the "traditional" chat show: shows where the primary concern was the sort of honest and sincere self-disclosure that Langer (1981) argues is so important for television's personality system. Although Michael Parkinson has returned to BBC1 and his show follows this traditional format, elsewhere interviews tend to be conducted quite differently (see below). Tolson (1991) writes in detail about the transformation of the "straight" celebrity interview: viewers in the 1990s may still be intensely curious about celebrities "as they really are", but a knowing audience can no longer readily believe the answers which they realise may or may not

be true. Nowadays it is accepted that what anyone says in the media, "might be honest, sincere etc., but it might equally be a performance, an act of cleverness, an exercise in public relations. Even apparent sincerity may be artificial, as Bob Monkhouse has acknowledged" (Tolson, 1996, p.149).

Clearly now when sophisticated media consumers know that all may not be as it appears, and when broadcasting's personalities themselves self-reflect on their identities and draw attention to the construction of their performances, then, as Tolson points out, "the conditions for the reproduction of the kind of personality effect described by Langer, are now being progressively undermined" (ibid.). Writing about "personality as performance", Tolson (1991, p.185) explains that the populist personality discourse, with its emphasis on sincerity and authenticity, is not entirely redundant, but rather that it is now being interrogated.

Brand and Scannell (1991) consider two sociological views of self-identity as offered by Goffman and Garfinkel: the cynical and the serious. They conclude by suggesting a third: the playful self. This view differs from the previous two because it has a characteristic of self-reflexiveness: that is, they say, "awareness of the performed nature of the displayed self" (p.215). This element of self-reflexiveness is repressed in the sincere performance, which claims it is not in fact a performance at all but is real. It is however manifest in playful performances. They describe *The Tony Blackburn Show* as playful and fun and state that send-up, particularly of himself, has always been part of Tony Blackburn's style. They also claim that in his radio show, Blackburn can assume a number of different identities within minutes. Crucially though, this is always quite self-conscious (p.209). It is intended that listeners will recognise his performance as a

performance, and he uses a variety of different voices to mark these intentions. According to Brand and Scannell, he can deploy his ordinary speaking voice, a DJ voice, an authoritative voice, an empathetic voice, and camp or send-up voices, using voice changes to cue his shifts in and out of his different roles (p.210).

An "awareness of the performed nature of the displayed self" is now widely recognised and playful performances are currently popular. In his examination of "chat" as a broadcast speech genre, Tolson (1991) claims that the tendency towards "playful" forms of talk has now assumed dominance. The interview in the contemporary talk show is dedicated to banter and is, he says, "explicitly and transparently a *performance* of 'chat'" (p.185). Tolson looks at illustrative material from *Wogan* and *The Dame Edna Experience*. The latter, which was first broadcast in 1987, was a parody of the conventional talk show. Tolson (1996) describes how, in this spoof hosted by a theatrical dame, chat, "was reduced to a kind of pantomime, in which the guests were required to give straight performances, and where the main source of wit was Dame Edna 'herself'" (p.147). More recently something similar could be seen on BBC1's comedy chat show *The Mrs Merton Show* where real guests are interviewed by a spoof pensioner host played by Caroline Aherne.

The sceptical modern talk show host such as Clive Anderson is no longer willingly accommodating to his guests. *Clive Anderson Talks Back* (his show on Channel 4 which ran for ten series) and the similarly formatted *Clive Anderson All Talk* (which began on BBC1 in October 1996) are good examples of the fact that nowadays the interview, where nothing can be taken seriously, has become a game in which the focus is less on getting to know about the guest than on displays of witty verbal badinage.

Journalist Andrew Duncan agrees, saying that, "Most chat shows are now subversive, with hosts like Clive Anderson and Mrs Merton not taking their guests at their own evaluation of themselves" (1996, June 1-7, p.17). Recently however it has been suggested that, "perhaps things are on the turn". Interviewing Clive Anderson for BBC2's *On Air*, David Aaronovitch said, "Irony and distance are becoming less fashionable. The older virtues of sincerity and warmth are definitely in. That's why Parkinson is back" (Hughes, 1998, February 18). Aaronovitch accuses Anderson of representing a pre-Diana era, but Anderson denies this, claiming there will always be room for a number of different styles of chat show.

Alan Partridge's chat show *Knowing Me Knowing You* features not only a spoof host but spoof guests as well. Alan Partridge is a character played by comic Steve Coogan. As the bogus media personality Alan Partridge, Steve Coogan's is a playful and satirical performance: one knowing, sophisticated audiences can find funny.[2] In the following extract, the notion that personalities are constructed personae who give potentially insincere performances is being drawn on. Partridge's guest is Keith Hunt (played by Patrick Marber). He is introduced as having been a DJ on a local radio station's "loony" breakfast show, but is now a top TV presenter: the audience knows the type. During their exchange the image of personalities being down-to-earth is being ridiculed, as are of course the conventions of personal disclosure.

Partridge:	Now Keith, what's the secret of your success?
Hunt:	I'm an ordinary bloke.
Partridge:	Right. Am I an ordinary bloke?
Hunt:	Dead ordinary.
Partridge:	Good. Good?
Hunt:	It's good, it's good. Every Saturday I go to the footy with me kid, I go down the pub with me mates, pint of bitter, game a' darts. First thing I do when I fly up to Leeds.

Partridge: Yeah I, I'm the same. I can often be found in Norwich, you know, propping up the bar at the Pheasant Brasserie.

Hunt: Sunday lunch. Sunday lunch. Roast beef, Yorkshire pud, cup of tea, magic.

Partridge: I'm the same. Down the Harvester, Sunday platter, glass of wine, cheers.

Hunt: We're ordinary, ordinary, ordinary, ordinary.

(Iannucci, 1994, September 16)

While the series was running, Alan Partridge also appeared in subsidiary forms of circulation "in his own right": for example, he was interviewed for the weekly questionnaire feature in the *Radio Times* ("Alan Partridge questionnaire," 1997, November 1-7). He was also interviewed by Clive Anderson on his BBC1 talk show (Thorogood, 1997, November 20). Again, no mention was made of Steve Coogan who performs Partridge. An implied reference was made to the spoof nature of the act only once when Anderson asked Partridge what he thinks of pretend chat show hosts like Larry Sanders and Partridge replied that he doesn't quite get the joke. The point about Alan Partridge, as clearly demonstrated here, is that everyone - viewers at home, the studio audience, the interviewer, comedian Steve Coogan - is in on the satirical joke: everyone except for Alan Partridge himself that is and he remains oblivious to the fact that he is a source of humour. Such is his celebrity status that Alan Partridge even presented an award at *The Brit Awards* (broadcast on ITV on 10 February 1998).

This discussion of performed sincerity will conclude with Tolson's (1996) point that, "In the face of all this interest in what the stars are really like, perhaps we need to remind ourselves of a simple and obvious point - that we will never really know" (p.128). Yet subsidiary forms of circulation remain committed to asking this question, despite being sceptical about the answers: as the following extract illustrates well. Here Dan Glaister

has interviewed Gaby Roslin for *The Guardian*. He says of Roslin that, "she's, well, just like she is on the telly," and goes on:

> It is difficult to tell if Roslin is performing or if she really is like this. "I'm the same on and off", might be her catchphrase. Except that Gaby has no catchphrase. A catchphrase would reek of artifice. Her first words to me are: "I know you! I do! I know you! Your face is so familiar! No, no, no, no . . . Wait . . . It will come to me . . . Oh God, I do know you." It is charming and, I am sure, entirely genuine. If it is an act, who cares? I believe it. She believes it. It works. (Glaister, 1996, April 8)

As Glaister points out, whether she knows him or not, he knows Gaby Roslin: He knows Gaby Roslin the television personality and he knows her persona (which, of course, is not necessarily the real Gaby Roslin).

Conclusion to Section 3

In this section it has been explained that watching a presenter involves questions about the authenticity of their performance and that the concept of sincerity is crucial to broadcasting's personality system. It was noted that there has always been public fascination with the true identities of media performers, but that in the case of personality presenters audiences are led to believe that their real personalities are there to see, that in their very ordinariness they are being themselves. However it has been argued that journalistic interrogations have made contemporary audiences aware of the construction of personae and they can no longer readily accept as genuine the image a personality presents or the performance of sincerity they give. This section highlighted the fact that playful performances and spoofs, which demonstrate an awareness of the performed nature of the displayed self, are currently popular.

Every celebrity has his or her "persona": it is this persona, not the "real" person, which the public knows. Although it makes claims about revealing the real person, subsidiary circulation actually serves more to authenticate the persona. The persona is a public identity, defined by elements from both the personality's professional and personal lives. A presenter's persona may be constructed; certainly it is carefully managed (the latter terminology is preferred in this thesis). Agents are responsible for managing their clients' careers and this includes maintaining successful images. The media can be used or even manipulated in order to do so. That is not to say, however, that in the case of some of broadcasting's personalities, their persona is far removed from their true identity. And certainly the fact that, in many instances, audience members feel that they do know what their favourite personalities are really like is an important one, because it is a crucial factor in the formation of the para-social relationships that may then develop. Chapter Three looks in detail at persona and examines how one particular media personality is presented to the audience.

Questions about the true identity of media personalities, the authenticity of their performances, and the extent to which their personae have been constructed or managed are fruitless because they will never be answered. However it would be valuable to ask how awareness of these questions affects an audience's perceptions of and responses to a media personality. Viewers and listeners obviously still commit to para-social relationships with presenters, but how might the cynicism members of a knowing modern audience have about image and persona alter that commitment? This is considered later in Chapter Five.

[1]Although, surprisingly perhaps, the first issue of *Radio Times* dated 28 September 1923 included an item entitled "Gossip about Artistes": a fact highlighted by Taylor and Mullan (1986, p.170). Briggs (1981) notes that the mid-1930s saw new human-interest radio celebrity magazines (modelled on the film magazines of the late 1920s) inviting readers to "read about the stars you've heard" (p.139).

[2]Alan Partridge has his biographical narrative and, like all presenters, what we know of him is a combination of his professional career and his personal life. In the last show of the (supposedly) live *Knowing Me Knowing You* series he accidentally shot a guest dead. Although he was cleared in a subsequent inquiry, the BBC did not recommission his chat show. Partridge did return to BBC2 however in a new six part series, *I'm Alan Partridge* (beginning 3 November 1997). Now working as a DJ on Radio Norwich in the 4:30-7:00am slot, separated from his wife, and living in Linton Travel Tavern, this is a fly-on-the-wall documentary programme, which follows Partridge's desperate attempts to revive his flagging career. Interestingly, little is made of the potential mismatch between reality and image, and Partridge is revealed to be exactly the same "in real life" as he is in his programmes: he may be obnoxious, but he is genuinely so.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PROFESSIONAL PERSONALITY

Introduction

Defining the word "personality", Raymond Williams (1983) refers to "a specialized C20 development - significantly, as so often, in both politics and entertainment - of a new noun from the most limited sense. There are 'leading personalities' . . . but there are also, emphatically, 'Personalities'" (pp.233-234). These personalities are well-known people (and thus only a small percentage of the population can be personalities in this way). This chapter begins by exploring the fact that nowadays television and radio presenters make a career being "a professional personality". It then takes an original angle on broadcasting's personality system by concentrating on the fact that the careers of these professional personalities are looked after by managers and agents. The chapter is divided into two sections accordingly. Again material from academic and non-academic sources is drawn on.

The Professional Personality

The first section of this chapter looks at what is referred to as the old and new schools of personality presenters. It begins by considering the old school, as represented in Robert Robinson's television documentary from 1986, before moving on to the new school. Presenters in the new school embark on their broadcasting careers with the ambition of becoming a well-known personality. This section sets out to explain that professional personalities operate as commodities in broadcasting's competitive marketplace.

When described as a "professional personality" by Robinson (1986, November 18) in *The Magic Rectangle. An Anatomy of the TV Personality*, many of those interviewed

objected to the phrase. Esther Rantzen retorted, "I'm not a professional personality, because I don't know what that means and I don't know how to do that." Other presenters also indicated their dislike of the word "personality" itself and, again, insisted they do not think of themselves in that way.

There may be several reasons for this objection to being labelled by the phrase "professional television personality". Robinson suggests that it is partly because being defined as such seems to bring with it insecurity, the risk of being flavour of the month, and then the fear of "Didn't you used to be ...?". As noted in the previous chapter, those who are known for being personalities are vulnerable to public taste and can go out of favour. In a series of essays for *The Independent* newspaper, which consider fame, Peter Popham (1996, November 27) is in agreement that "celebrity" (which no longer necessarily follows achievement) brings with it risk. He speculates that the media, central in the making of the modern celebrity, seems to delight in tearing down the stars it has invented or has helped to invent: thus, it could be conjectured, the reluctance on the part of broadcasters to become regarded as famous for being personalities. Perhaps they also object to the implied absence of skill. Their reluctance to acknowledge the word "professional" may be due to their realisation that this notion detracts from the "naturalness" it is important that they display.

However what is also clear in Robinson's documentary, broadcast over a decade ago, is that there seems to be some disdain for the nature of the celebrity bestowed by television. Robinson makes the point that before television, to receive public attention or to acquire fame you had to do something extraordinary (i.e., something the audience could not do itself), but that now you do so *just* by appearing on television. In a similar

vein McDonald Hobley, an early television announcer contributing to Robinson's programme, makes the claim that although you need talent to be a star, you do not need it to be a television personality: the key to the latter is simply continuity of exposure. As discussed in the first section of the previous chapter, regular appearances by presenters are indeed central to television's personality system, but the idea expressed by Hobley is that this is all that is involved. Robinson states that personality is accorded mass attention and stresses that, while the specific gravity of attention received by a television personality may be on the low side, the volume of attention is huge. The programme looks at the case of Marghanita Laski.

This writer and broadcaster was once a star turn on *What's My Line* but she chose to give up her role as a television personality. Citing discovering penicillin or writing an excellent book as activities worthy of recognition, Laski explains that she could not welcome the deference she received "just" for playing a simple parlour game. Sir Robin Day, who says the show was such a national event that the panel did indeed receive huge attention, adds that she was "worried about unwholesome worship". A fellow panellist of Laski's was Gilbert Harding who, according to Robinson, was chronically dissatisfied as a television personality. Bill Cotton supports this point, describing how Harding was given the status of a man of importance when he felt he had done nothing to earn it but sit on TV.[1] Malcolm Muggeridge, also interviewed for the documentary, says that being on television is something he treats with contempt and he too felt unwholesome about the recognition.

In her conversation with Robinson, Selina Scott says she finds it difficult to give her autograph and does not like doing so because she believes you should ask people for

their autograph if they are famous. She regards people as famous when they have done something with their lives that has made them famous: she gives the first man on top of Everest and Mother Theresa as examples. Whereas Scott calls herself a communicator, stating, "And communicators shouldn't be famous. Should they?"

Former announcer Leslie Mitchell explains that in the early days of television it was forbidden for male announcers to get publicity and that they were very seldom even mentioned by name. Announcers were the representatives of the BBC and, as such, Sylvia Peters describes how they always had to be smart, even when off-air. On-air the female announcers wore evening dresses and their male colleagues appeared in dinner jackets. These first television presenters gave the impression of being "well-bred" and they spoke politely using Received Pronunciation. Clearly their role was defined as representative, not personality.[2] The same applied to radio. According to Patricia Hughes, so far as early radio announcers like her were concerned, "you were simply a mouthpiece for the service. You weren't a person, well not really a person at all. No little jokes, no little being laid back, you know the clever pun. Oh no. Nothing" ("Between the ears," 1998, May 16). It is claimed in the Radio 3 programme from which this quote is taken that there was little personality in such "correct" voices.

Krishan Kumar (1977) explains that from its early Reithian days, BBC announcers were used to create the public image of the institution: their formality and anonymity fed into this strategy. The cultivation of a formal style relates to the fact that the BBC wanted to promote a cultural and moral authoritativeness. Its members of staff were expected to embody and convey "high culture" and "high morality". Announcers were anonymous because the intention was that they would represent the BBC's "collective personality"

(pp.239-240). Thus, as Kumar points out, the highly individualized American style of announcing, which emphasised informality and personality, was "explicitly rejected" (p.239).

Competition from ITV however shifted this professional ideology about the role of presenters. According to Tolson (1996, p.135), the concept of "personality" was introduced to British television in the 1950s and has been closely associated with it since then. When the commercial station ITV began in 1955, influenced by America and by consumerism, it brought with it some major innovations. Its new populist approach included an emphasis on personality.[3] Although the personality effect had its beginnings in light entertainment, elements were carried over into other genres, and so, for example, the ITN news was read by named newscasters.[4] By the late 1950s, on ITV (as reflected in the channel's listing guide, *TV Times*) the focus was on well-known names.

Although personality proliferated on ITV, Britain's first major television personality actually emerged, albeit unintentionally, on the BBC before the arrival of commercial television: Andy Medhurst (1991) claims this of Gilbert Harding. As a panellist on *What's My Line*, Harding personified television in the first half of the 1950s. Since then presenters have been able to make a career being a personality and we recognise the existence of professional personalities in broadcasting. These are the people who, for example, appear as celebrity contestants on quiz shows or whose homes are featured in magazines, even when they may not have a series of their own. Patrick Moore, an astronomer and presenter interviewed for Robinson's (1986) programme, describes how he is regarded as a "universal pundit" and is invited onto all sorts of other programmes

simply because he is on television. Moore claims he finds this funny and absurd. However, Rosalind Brunt (1984) discusses the fact that some personalities build a career out of such appearances. In relation to the panel game *What's My Line* she says:

> their reason for being on the show is, importantly, to ensure continuity of employment in the celebrity world of media/showbiz/bestsellerdom to which they all belong. For they are mainly individual freelancers who must depend on a constant supply of public appearances for successive work contracts. And to work as a gameshow panellist is to enhance personality, status and hence the fee that can be commanded. (p.26)

Professional personalities have to sell themselves. From game show spots to supermarket openings, such self-promotion is what having a career as a personality is largely about nowadays, and modern presenters - unlike Patrick Moore - surely enter into their profession fully aware that this is what is involved. In his book *Making it as a Radio or TV Presenter*, Baker (1995) includes a chapter entitled "Promoting Yourself" in which he gives tactics on keeping a high profile and advice on personal appearances. He says, "As a working presenter, you must strive, at all times, to keep your profile high" (p.134). Promoting yourself is vital "to ensure that your standing against other, rival presenters does not drop and that supplementary jobs are regularly offered to you" (ibid.). He adds that, "in the competitive, fragile world of broadcasting you need as much kudos, publicity and money you can get" (ibid.).

Russell Harty (1982), referring to himself as a commodity, says, "I work in a marketplace, and I want people to buy things from my stall" (p.136). Harty's account illustrates the argument thus far in this chapter when he describes how he felt first embarrassed and then annoyed about being called a television personality because the description has, he says, an air of disapproval and of "intellectual leprosy" (p.130). It is

crucial to note though, as he does, that he had a television "personality" thrust upon him and it is this that seems to have led to his questioning and self-doubt. However he recognises that the situation is changing as others are becoming proud of their status as television personalities.

Therefore it is possible to differentiate between what might be called the old and the new "schools" of television presenters. Harty belongs to the former. In previous decades "being a personality" could be a source of embarrassment, objection, or disdain for those who ended up in that position; whereas for a modern generation of presenters, "the new school", this has been their aim - they have set out with the ambition to be well known as personalities. Robinson states that:

> The first television personalities simply wanted jobs at the BBC. They didn't arrange to be what they became, it simply happened by accident. But now the thing's an identifiable condition, it can be aimed at, it can be hankered after. (1986, November 18)

Wyatt (1996) also comments in his lecture on the altered nature of making a career from being a television presenter. He says, "Routes to the screen have changed over the years. In former days they were more circuitous, people did it almost, I say almost, by accident. . . . Competition is more structured these days," and he makes the point that today many children grow up with the ambition of being on television. It is worth noting that this ambition can be strong enough to take on drastic measures: in an article in *The Guardian*, Byron Rogers (1995, June 10) refers to a news story about a mother in Coventry who was proposing to spend £2000 on plastic surgery which would alter her 14-year-old daughter's face so that she could become a television personality.

As indicated earlier, it is possible to buy books giving instruction on how to have a career in radio or television presentation: Baker's (1995) guide sells itself as an invaluable handbook which is essential reading for all would-be presenters. It is also possible to go on training courses. The *ITV Association* runs various courses including one aimed at new presenters. *Presenters' Professional Management (PPM)*, which specialises in presenters' jobs and opportunities in the North of England, organises regular radio and television training courses. *Pozitive Productions* runs a one-day television presenters' course. They claim to have been pioneers in this field since 1991, and to currently be the largest and most successful presenter-trainers in the UK. This crash course for beginners involves intensive coaching during a 12-hour day that is almost completely practical and at the end of which the participant has a compilation video-tape showreel to use in their search for a presenting job. According to the information brochure they send in response to an enquiry (J. Winters, personal communication, April 6, 1998), many of their ex-students are now presenting and the course itself has been featured on several television programmes charting their success. Included in the information pack is a selection of press reviews written by journalists who attended the course and who report of presenting that "it's not as easy as it looks!".

Writing about "the glut of the personality", Lusted (1984) claims that there is an economic imperative to television's construction and maintenance of personalities, because the "stock of recognised names" central to the institution acts as assurance of audience following. Thus according to Lusted, an effect of television's personality system is "the production of more personalities in the relentless search for high viewing figures" (p.73), and he goes on to state that, "the constant need to top up the stock produces a veritable *glut* of personalities" (ibid.).[5]

Despite this excessive supply of personalities, companies nonetheless compete for the "biggest" presenters (i.e., the most well-known and popular). Just as film companies pay huge fees to secure "big names", knowing that cinema goers will be attracted by their presence, so too television companies offer lucrative contracts to famous presenters in the expectation that this will boost the channel's ratings: television programmes can be created, packaged, publicised, and distinguished through them. Jane Shattuc (1997, p.54) makes this point about Oprah Winfrey, arguing that *Oprah* was sold to advertisers and stations based on its host. Shattuc explains that hosts are talk shows' major form of "product differentiation" (p.55), and that, "Economically, television personalities function similarly to film stars" (p.56).[6] In a television interview, producer Harry Thompson explains that because there are more channels and the pressure for ratings is greater than ever before, there is a need to go for the "big celebrity" and not to take risks in the mainstream slots with someone less famous (Hughes, 1998, February 11). This in turn gives celebrity presenters more pulling power and thus talent is more expensive. Likewise, journalist Roland White wrote:

> This is a boom time for presenters. Now that new companies have taken over major franchises, and more work is being done by independent producers, well-known faces can command vast salaries as programme-makers compete for their services. (1993, January 9)

The high earnings of top presenters reflects the rivalry of the channels in the ratings war. Cilla Black, who provides ITV's Saturday night opposition to the BBC with *Blind Date*, is reportedly the UK's highest paid female television presenter. According to journalist Andrew Culf (1995, October 19), her contract with London Weekend Television was, at the time of writing, "reliably estimated" at £3 million for two years. Anthea Turner's two-year contract with Carlton UK Television signed in October 1995 was said to be

worth £1.5 million, a deal that "confirmed her as one of the hottest properties in TV-land" (ibid.). In an attempt to compete with their rival, Turner was also given a two-year £600,000 contract with *GMTV*, then losing advertisers and audiences to Channel 4's successful *The Big Breakfast* presented by Gaby Roslin. Then BBC1 signed Turner up as the presenter with which they launched the new National Lottery show and paid her £5,000 for each 15-minute Saturday night appearance.

The fact that channels compete for well-known personality presenters, offering them ever increasing sums of money, has contributed to the rise of the middle person - the agent. Introducing a television discussion on the subject, journalist and presenter David Aaronovitch explains that agents drive hard bargains about where their clients can appear, for how long, and for how much (Hughes, 1998, February 11). Aaronovitch raises concerns that power is therefore draining from broadcasters to agents who are not as accountable.[7] Contributing to the programme, an agent agrees that part of her role is establishing the worth of her client, but points out that, beyond the issue of money, it is also necessary to establish a good relationship with broadcasting companies. Indeed, Alan Yentob suggests that the BBC will have to look to maintaining long-term relationships with new talent in order to avoid having to replace the talent they can no longer afford being bought out by their competitors.

Having secured their "big names" as assets, channels then advertise their programmes through them.[8] For example, as Tolson (1996, p.135) points out, in TV guides the focus on personality presenters (who regularly appear on the front cover) is the most popular form of advertising forthcoming programmes. Features emphasise personality and lifestyle, often telling readers much less about the programme than about its host.

Phillip Schofield's move to ITV and the launch of his series there is a good example of this (see Chapter Three). Shattuc (1997) also notes that talk shows are branded in this way: the host is central to publicity generated by the industry.

It seems inevitable then that famous television personalities come to be thought of as celebrities or even stars. However this is a potentially problematical fact. Firstly, it has been claimed that the phenomenon of stardom is not part of the realm of broadcasting. Gledhill (1991), for instance, whilst recognising that stardom has passed from the cinema to the worlds of music and sport, states that, "the very different forms of television produce personalities not stars; to achieve stardom means breaking out of the medium" (xiii). However, clearly television presenters do "move outside of their programmes into a range of other texts" (Strange, 1998, p.311), and some may in fact be given similar media coverage to their film counterparts. Medhurst (1991, p.72) directly addresses the question of the distinction between a television "star" and a television "personality" in his discussion of Gilbert Harding; one of the most famous people in Britain throughout the 1950s. As Medhurst demonstrates, through subsidiary forms of circulation and so on, Harding seems to qualify as a star. Yet Medhurst is reluctant to regard Harding in this way. This relates to the second problem of television stardom: stars are not ordinary. As Medhurst explains:

> something still pulls me back from calling him a star. I think it's something to do with the fact that most film stars have an aura of mystery, of otherworldliness, of sexual desirability, that is enhanced by the size of the screen and the darkness of the cinema. (ibid.)

This thesis suggests that due to the importance of their appearances outside television in contributing to their public presence, well-known television personalities are best

described as *media* personalities, and furthermore that they are more appropriately thought of as celebrities rather than stars.[9]

In conclusion then, nowadays many television and radio presenters can be regarded as professional personalities and can be seen as competing as commodities. Broadcasting companies and institutions value big name presenters through whom they can package programmes and attract audiences. In order that they can be used to sell programmes, professional personalities have to promote themselves. Most presenters enter into subsidiary forms of circulation and are intertextual, with well-known media personalities achieving celebrity status. It is not surprising then that, as alluded to above, agents and managers are involved in their careers.

Management

It is argued that the part played by agents and managers ought to be acknowledged in contemporary considerations of broadcasting's personality system. The remainder of this chapter will therefore concentrate on the fact that presenters employ management companies to look after their careers.[10] Such "management" seems to remain an area that has received no real academic interest.[11] However, as shall be demonstrated, an awareness of the management process is present in media considerations of personality presenters: and thus, it could be argued, indicates public awareness also.

This public awareness of the management process is significant if management companies are seen as the "publicity machine" behind their clients. Nowadays there is a general recognition that public relations is practised throughout the media: in some

instances this is blatantly obvious, in others it may be less so. Knowledge of its presence and increasing role affects our media consumption as a whole and generally there has developed a reluctance to take at face value the self-presentation of those who appear. There is a belief that what appears to be "real" or "genuine" or "natural" may in fact have been created or manipulated. In other words, "all may not be as it seems" because it may be an exercise in PR. The increasingly important part played by public relations in creating favourable images for politicians has led to scepticism surrounding politics, for example.

As we have seen, Langer (1981) argued that television's personality system works because personalities appear down-to-earth, ordinary, as they really are: in other words, they seem to be being themselves. It is crucial to acknowledge that Langer was writing almost twenty years ago and that since then PR has penetrated the media, and, it should be suspected, has even influenced and continues to influence broadcasting's personality system. As highly sophisticated media consumers, a modern-day audience is aware of the construction of image and persona. As discussed in the previous chapter, nowadays watching a television personality has a lot to do with gauging how much of their performance is authentic and how much is artificial. The idea central to the discussion here is that public awareness of the management of personality presenters is potentially a hurdle to their credibility.

With these implications in mind, in order to gain some insight into what public perceptions of management might be, this study is now going to profile the company that manages Phillip Schofield - the television and radio presenter who is the subject of

the case study in Chapter Three - concentrating especially on both the reputation of the company and the role of the managers as presented to the public.

The James Grant Group of Companies was established in March 1984 as a privately owned entertainment and leisure group. Its holding company, the James Grant Media Group Ltd, consists of a number of wholly or part owned companies, which include interests in media production and investment in musical theatre. James Grant Management Ltd is the company in the group that manages media artists. The founders of the group are Peter (James) Powell and Russell (Grant) Lindsay. Paul Worsley is the Director of Artist Management. The James Grant Media Group's Internet website (located at http://www.james-grant.co.uk), which has been updated a number of times since this research began, has been the source of access to some of the facts below. Additional unreferenced "information" has been gathered from personal correspondence with the company. The magazine and newspaper articles introduced were either collected in relation to fandom of Phillip Schofield (see Chapter Three) or found in a CD-ROM search.

Peter Powell was himself a successful radio and television broadcaster: in the 1980s he was a popular Radio 1 DJ and regular presenter of *Top of the Pops*. He was one of the many people teenager Phillip Schofield - working as a bookings clerk at BBC Broadcasting House - asked for advice about starting a career in broadcasting. As Schofield was about to emigrate to New Zealand, Powell advised him to try to get into radio and television there. When Schofield achieved this he kept in contact with Powell, sending him tapes of the programmes he was presenting. As soon as Schofield returned to the UK, Powell and his partner Russ Lindsay - a former DJ and manager of

bands and musicians who had been working with Powell since 1983 - accepted Schofield onto the books of their newly formed management company.

Their next signing was Simon Mayo (Radio 1 DJ), followed by Anthea Turner (*Top of the Pops* presenter), Mark Goodier (Radio 1 DJ), and Caron Keating (*Blue Peter* presenter). By 1989, with the addition of John Leslie (*Blue Peter* presenter), Andrea Boardman (children's presenter on *The Disney Club*), and Jakki Brambles (Radio 1 DJ), they were responsible for eight successful broadcasting personalities and the company had moved from its base in Powell's home to a modern office in Hammersmith. These eight clients were all associated with either Radio 1 or with children's television, and could be said to be a certain type of personality: "the boy/girl-next-door". The word "stable" has been used by journalists to describe James Grant's group of young presenters (e.g., Treacher, 1994, October 29, p.6).

It is tempting to draw parallels with Larry Parnes' famous "stable of stars" consisting of clean-cut, wholesome, traditional teen idols. Larry Parnes is one of the managers profiled by Johnny Rogan (1989). Indeed Rogan claims he is the most famous British pop manager of the 1950s (and possibly the greatest ever). At that time with the success of stars like Elvis Presley in the US, here in the UK lower middle-class entrepreneurs were keen to promote a British dimension to this phenomenon. Larry Parnes was one such entrepreneur and, although he knew nothing about rock 'n' roll, having seen the reaction to Johnnie Ray he wanted to produce a "similarly sensational home-grown star" (p.18). Britain's first rock 'n' roll star, Tommy Steele, was one of his protégés. A powerful and skilled "starmaker", Parnes, along with his colleague John Kennedy, established themselves as "the decade's most successful discoverers of teenage talent"

(p.20), and the young artistes under their management proliferated. This attracted media attention.

> The documentary programme *Panorama* included a special feature on the 'beat svengali' and the national press soon followed their lead. However, rather than hailing Parnes as a twentieth-century conceptualist, they branded him a stud farmer. His protégés became known as the 'stable of stars' and much time was spent explaining precisely how they had been 'groomed'. (Rogan, 1989, p.27)

Parnes' teen sensations were persuaded to change their names, dressed in new clothes, introduced to important journalists, and taught to appear relaxed and confident (p.21). He was careful to maintain clean-cut, wholesome images for his stars whose sexuality was largely submerged and he realised that any scandal attached to one in his stable would reflect badly on the others (p.26). Rogan claims Parnes was also always acutely aware of the need to keep his artistes' feet firmly on the ground. Almost inevitably in the *Panorama* programme referred to above, "great stress was placed upon the market value of the boys and several of them were asked whether they felt manipulated or exploited" (p.29). The interviewer even asked one of the artistes "if he felt like a puppet" (ibid.). These are questions that continued to be raised with regard to each newly groomed pop act for the next forty years and are still asked today.[12] They are also questions that are, to some extent, raised in relation to the new breed of personality presenters, such as those represented by James Grant.

James Grant's stable of stars has attracted media attention. In February 1990, *More* magazine included a feature on the management company. In her introduction to the magazine, the editor, Morag Prunty, wrote the following:

> Wouldn't you just hate to be described as "nice". It's a non-committal, mediocre word that suggests brain-numbing naivety and earth-shattering dullness. To say someone is "nice" suggests they're not intelligent or noticeable enough to deserve a more creative description. And yet, a new breed of successful young TV and radio stars is currently sweeping the country, each one with their very own, irrepressible brand of niceness: Phillip Schofield, Anthea Turner, Simon Mayo and others - all polite, well-spoken, obviously squeaky-clean young people who are currently very much in vogue. So what is it about these highlighted and disinfected presenters that makes them so popular? Jeanette Baker spoke to the men responsible for this nationwide outburst of normality - their agents Peter Powell and Russ Lindsay. They show you how, with the correct dose of niceness...(and a bit of talent too), you could be a star!

When challenged on whether their clients are born like this or whether they make the mould in their "nice factory", Powell and Lindsay insist that the artists they manage are genuinely nice young people (Baker, 1990, February, p.42). Powell explains their philosophy as follows:

> People think that if you're mean and moody, and a bit of a prima donna, you'll get everyone to say, 'Yes, anything you want', but that's a long way from the truth. They might do what you want, but they'll walk away and mutter 'prat' under their breath. You can't survive for any length of time in our business with people having that sort of attitude towards you. You don't *have* to be a pain in the bum. (ibid.)

Describing their job in management, Powell and Lindsay say they become responsible for people, rather than just booking them jobs, and try to "buffer them against the trials and tribulations of the fame game" (ibid.). This responsibility involves matters such as sorting out legal, tax, and accounting problems, even buying and selling houses, and dealing with everyday hassles. Managing, in this environment, seems to be about guidance, advice, and help - not moulding - and there is an emphasis on longevity. They claim that the manager's role is about creating, not the celebrity, but the right

environment. According to Powell, "The art of management is to create an environment for talent to succeed - and that's what we do" (ibid.), and Lindsay adds:

> We take our artists and look at what they want to be doing ten years from now. To do that, we get to know them, we take them to dinner, we go and see their parents and we find out *all* about them. . . . Our job is to help them get on with their careers, to make sure that they're still going to be around in ten years time. And we hope that they will also be as nice then as they are now. (ibid.)

By 1994, four more young, new presenters on Children's BBC were under the aegis of James Grant Management - Andi Peters, Emma Forbes, Toby Anstis, and Zoë Ball - and they were also responsible for the career of musical star Darren Day. More recently the company, ever growing, moved premises again and the client list of artists currently stands at eighteen. All remain a certain type of broadcaster for whom James Grant, continuing to specialise in this market, clearly recognises there is much demand.[13] It has been reported of Anthea Turner for example, that, "her friends and admirers believe it is the wholesome, girl next door image which pulls in the viewers and attracts television executives" (Culf, 1995, October 19).

Media critics, on the other hand, have accused this type of personality of being "bland": a criticism levelled at Anthea Turner, Zoë Ball, and Emma Forbes, amongst others, by journalist Peter Hillmore (1996, August 18) in *The Observer* for example. Likewise Harriet Lane describes Darren Day as "totally naff" (1997, October 26). She reports that Phillip Schofield introduced Darren Day to Peter Powell whom she describes as "managerial Svengali to some of the squeakiest, cleanest characters in the media". Lane claims that, engineering Day's big break, Powell "has steered his client firmly towards

an MOR plateau" and she states, "It seems clear that by joining the Powell stable, Darren struck a pact with the devil that is Light Entertainment" (ibid.).

As suggested above, James Grant Management is a company that has allowed itself to become highly visible: or has even, it could be said, actively promoted itself. For example, there was lots of publicity surrounding the marriages of the company directors who both married clients: Powell married Anthea Turner in January 1990 and Lindsay married Caron Keating in June 1991 (and they each chose one another to be best man). Powell and Turner occasionally appeared together in magazine features as a "media couple": for example, *House Beautiful* (Ewbank, 1992, March) and *Hello!* (Treacher, 1994, October 29).

It is not uncommon for Powell himself, as a manager, to be the focus of publicity. For example, a double page feature appeared in *Today* headlined, "I promised Anthea the stars...and I meant it" (Wallin, 1994, July 23). Here the journalist interviews Powell - not Turner - "in the plush Hammersmith offices of James Grant and Associates, the million-pound starmaking business of which he is co-director" (p.20). Pauline Wallin writes about the company, about Turner and Powell as a couple, and about Turner's career, which she suggests has been meticulously put together. Turner's ambition to present breakfast television - something she and Powell had been working towards for ten years - was about to be realised, "almost exactly to the day," boasts Powell. However he claims that his wife's success is due to her hard work and determination as much as his career guidance. Powell insists, "I'm not some kind of Svengali pulling the strings in the background. Anthea has a mind of her own" (ibid.).[14]

James Grant's visibility is reflected in reports of interviews conducted with their celebrity clients: reference is frequently made to Powell and Lindsay as managers and there is discussion about what exactly their role involves. For example, the following extracts are from the magazine *Tatler*, where Anthea Turner is being written about by Christa D'Souza (1996, February):

> What a pretty girl she is. Beautiful clear skin (albeit covered in foundation), mesmerisingly symmetrical features, gleaming teeth and stocky unthreatening legs make her the absolute prototype of that kittenish asexuality so sought after by the TV powers-that-be. There's a whole gaggle now (Caron Keating, Phillip Schofield and Zoë Ball among them), all represented by James Grant, the agency headed by Anthea's whizzy husband, former DJ Peter Powell, and Caron's husband, Russ Lindsay. (p.80)
>
> When I ask her about her next holiday, she tells me about a trip to Australia - for a special GMTV shoot. 'She and Peter rarely socialise,' observes one acquaintance. 'Whenever you see them out together it is because he has arranged the event for a client.' (p.82)
>
> Anthea made up her mind about Powell, who had left Radio One to set up his own talent agency, after a terrible accident she suffered while compering the Royal Tournament. Her hair and clothes caught fire on live TV and Powell was the first person to visit her in hospital. After four months of going out together, they married. That was 1990. In 1992 Anthea, now in Peter's extremely capable professional hands, became a presenter for *Blue Peter*. Those who know the couple are convinced that Powell is the key to Anthea's success. 'Peter is a brilliant businessman,' says one TV executive. 'He manages all the people he has like puppets. Peter's clients do everything he tells them to do. With Phillip Schofield, he virtually told him when he could let his hair go grey.' (ibid.)

The extent to which Powell influences those he manages is much debated and contested: is he a Svengali pulling the strings of his puppet clients? In the following example from *OK* magazine, Anthea Turner had recently been awarded the Variety Club Showbusiness Personality of the Year award. Interviewer Richard Barber (1996, March 27) says:

> But the Variety Club award was little more, surely, than the next stepping-stone in a game-plan carefully laid out by Anthea and husband, former Radio One DJ Peter Powell, now her manager? 'I cannot tell you,' she says, a trifle wearily, 'how many times I've read that Pete and I sat down and meticulously mapped out my career. And you know something? It's baloney. You could never have constructed a career like this. How could you? Yes, a good management company can open doors for you. But . . . you can't play God in this business.' (p.16)

Turner continues:

> I'm so proud of the way Pete re-invented himself, after he left Radio One at the height of his career and started a new career in management. I find it very helpful that he knows the business inside out. He's been there, done that, got the T-shirt. (p.18)

Turner and another presenter managed by James Grant, Emma Forbes, appeared together on the front cover of *Hello!* magazine: "Winner of the best dressed woman of the year award Emma Forbes shows us her wardrobe and celebrates with her friend and last year's winner Anthea Turner" (Rozsnyai, 1996, January 20). James Grant's clients regularly lend each other support and publicity like this. Inside the magazine the following was said:

> Anthea is far from being the so-called puppet of her husband and manager, Peter Powell, as some suggested recently when a leading magazine [*Tatler*] published some stunning pictures of the new "sexy-look" Anthea.
> "Peter had nothing to do with those pictures," she points out. "I wanted to do some photographs where I wasn't portrayed as "the girl next door". It was fun. It wasn't a strategic change in my image to enhance my career. Peter is not a Svengali figure in my life. He is my husband. He is also a partner of the company that manages me, so of course we talk about my career." (p.50)

While it might be denied that Powell is a Svengali figure, his role in marketing his clients cannot go unacknowledged. It is claimed that Powell himself once compared the

marketing of his wife to selling a car (Ahmed, 1998, April 8). Kamal Ahmed describes Powell as "a media fixer *par excellence*" (p.7). The "sexy-look" photographs of Turner that appeared in *Tatler* serve as an example. These pictures were apparently initiated by Turner herself, but the situation was marketed by Powell. This is discussed in an article in *the Observer Review* in which Roger Tredre (1996, January 14) considers the recent trend for female celebrities to be photographed semi-naked.

> That includes butter-wouldn't-melt-in-our-mouths celebrities, such as Anthea Turner. Russ Lindsay, who co-runs the management agency which represents Turner with her husband Peter Powell, claims the topless back shot for Tatler was impromptu. 'It wasn't planned. Anthea called us afterwards to say it was quite risqué.'
> They made the most of it, though. The picture was on the front cover of the Sun (sic) last Tuesday, presented as a bold career decision, with Anthea described as an 'incredibly sensual, sexy woman ... (sic) both she and Peter felt it was time to show that side of her to the public'. And the change of image neatly coincides with her imminent move from presenting the lottery to hosting her own show for ITV . . .
> If the decision to strip or not to strip is tricky for established celebrities, newer names have to be even more careful, Lindsay says. 'We sent two people along to the Sky magazine shoot for Zoe Ball, who is the new presenter of *The Big Breakfast*, to make sure she was not subjected to any "get your tits out for the boys" stuff. We had to be careful because *The Big Breakfast* appeals to children as much as adults.' (p.9)

The importance of subsidiary media for a broadcasting personality has been stressed previously. It is here that their image is reinforced and maintained. In the passage above, Russ Lindsay makes it clear that a risqué photo session could be damaging to Zoë Ball's reputation and career. Clearly part of the management of personalities involves the management or control of how they are presented in subsidiary material.

Some of James Grant's clients seem more willing to admit to their managers' control than others (or perhaps this is because James Grant control some more than others?). In an article from *The Observer* referred to above, Darren Day is quoted as saying:

> Everything that's happened to me, Pete's made happen. . . . He got me Joseph, he talked Andrew [Lloyd Webber] into using me. He said, 'Give him the part, we'll create enough hype to see the show out for three weeks,' which is what happened. (Lane, 1997, October 26)

Journalist Harriet Lane goes on to note that Day:

> does seem unusually self-aware about his position in the showbiz stratosphere admitting his orbit is 'quite kitsch' and talks clinically about himself as a piece of merchandise ('I don't want to do anything that would alienate the people who buy my product'). He describes lurching out of nightclubs and thinking: 'OK, as drunk as I am, I mustn't fall over, because I've got this boy-next-door label around my neck. It's marketing, at the end of the day.' (ibid.)

Day talks earnestly and openly about himself as a marketed commodity. Phillip Schofield, on the other hand, does not. In fact, this research project came across only one instance where Schofield "commodifies" himself. He does so only slightly by referring to himself as "a viable proposition" for employment. During an interview with David Mellor on *Classic fm*, when asked about the risk he had taken as a television presenter going into a musical, Schofield said:

> The risk was huge. There was no doubt that if it had failed em then I would have been holed below the waterline and it would have taken some really quite nifty patching to have re-floated me as a viable proposition for anyone to employ. So there was a huge gamble. (Mellor, 1998, April 26)

When Schofield refers to his managers he does not usually do so in terms of business: instead he talks about "Pete and Russ" as his best friends (e.g., "The Mizz questionnaire," 1990, March).

At the beginning of 1998, Peter Powell and Anthea Turner separated. This received much tabloid coverage. There are two points to be made about the break up of their marriage that are relevant to this study's considerations of potential public perceptions of James Grant Management and its clients. Firstly, newspaper reports suggested that the fact that Powell markets his clients like commodities impinged upon and became a problem for Turner in her personal relationship with her husband. Although she has admitted that she looks at herself as a "TV product" (Levin, 1998, March 14, p.8), it was reported that just before their split she rowed with Powell at a party, apparently shouting, "You don't think of me as a woman - you just think of me as a business" (Schaverien & Hamer, 1998, January 4). A *Sunday Mirror* journalist claims that Turner told her, "the truth is that I'm a business commodity to him. He doesn't see me as his wife any more" (Malone, 1998, January 4, p.3).

Secondly, prized for her clean image and with her success largely attributed to her wholesome personality, when Turner decided to leave her husband for a married man with three young daughters, she did, as she herself has acknowledged, put her job on the line (Wallace, 1998, April 7). Her controversial relationship with Grant Bovey received intense media attention, throughout which she risked being branded a "home wrecker" and a "scarlet woman" and losing the favour of her audiences. As expressed by *The Mirror*'s showbusiness editor, "Previously squeaky-clean Anthea was suddenly cast in the role of 'the other woman'" (ibid.). Described in *The Daily Telegraph* as a career

move to "shed her trademark wholesome image" (Boshoff, 1998, August 11). Turner has since posed completely naked for *Tatler* and the photographs were printed throughout the press. Her future success - or lack of it - remains to be seen.

Conclusion

A presenter's career and image are certainly controlled by their management company, but quite the extent to which this is so cannot be known for certain. What is crucial about this consideration of the professional personality is that it highlights a potential credibility problem, which has serious implications for broadcasting's personality system. This problem is that if we see celebrities are created and constructed for a market, can we still feel close to, trust in, and bound to them?[15] Is the extent to which we relate to a personality and feel for them as we might feel for a real life acquaintance not lessened when we realise that, handled by showbusiness tycoons, they are in fact a commodity? These are questions this study explored in discussions with "consumers" or fans (see Chapter Five).

This chapter also raises (at least two) questions which are not addressed here, but which could be followed up in further research. Firstly, this thesis has concentrated on just one management company and it would therefore be interesting to discover whether other agencies have different sorts of stables. Secondly, a presenter's management company is not solely responsible for controlling their image: the fact that the channel employing the presenter has a role to play here too should be taken into account in future study.

[1]Writing at length about Gilbert Harding, Medhurst (1991) highlights his "exasperation at ending up in light entertainment" (p.71). The tension between Harding's intellectualism and his television work was apparent throughout his career.

[2]However this does not correspond with viewers' responses and it has been noted that some announcers, such as Sylvia Peters, were more famous than those who performed in the programmes they introduced (Buscombe, 1984, p.131).

[3]Root (1986, pp.85-86) explains that whereas the BBC saw itself as taking culture to the people, ITV liked to think of itself as being of the people: hence its more human foregrounding of individuals and personality.

[4]As noted in the BBC1 documentary *A Night in with the Girls* (Dickinson, 1997, March 15), ITN also made what was at that time the "bold" decision to have a woman news reader: Barbara Mandell read the lunchtime news in the mid-1950s, though it was still not deemed appropriate for her to present the news in the evening.

[5]Of course, the dramatic increase in the number of personalities over the past decade is also simply due to the sheer increase in television channels and the introduction of 24 hour broadcasting. Jim Marshall (1990, p.100) calculates that during the 1980s transmission hours on commercial television alone almost tripled. Whilst the "big names" remain central, where once a few household figures appeared regularly to present programmes, now there are dozens of television presenters (and many are not well-known). Due to the fact that so many people are involved in television presentation, the notion that anyone can be a television presenter is enhanced. This is a point that was made by presenter Carol Vorderman during an interview with Michael Parkinson. Vorderman, who co-presented the first programme shown on Channel 4 on 2nd November 1982, says:

> In 1982 by definition there was no Channel 4, there was ITV, BBC1, and BBC2, there was no breakfast television, there was no daytime television, no satellite, there were just the great stars, like yourself, and eh . . . there was Parky, Brucie, and so on, but it was like television was something that other people did. (Ballard, 1999, January 8)

[6]Writing about BBC2's "guru series", Julian Petley (1983) highlights the fact that the role of the presenter is absolutely crucial. He points out that the "star of the show" plays a vital part in publicity selling the series and that therefore a famous name is of "enormous economic value" (p.14).

[7]This *On Air* discussion is based on the fact that some agents are themselves beginning to produce their clients' shows. A number of examples are given. For instance, Jack Dee's agent and business partner is also the executive producer of his programmes. Likewise, Skinner and Baddiel's agent set up in production to make their shows himself. He recently sold *Fantasy Football League* (originally a BBC show) to ITV for £5 million. Aaronovitch raises concerns that agent-producers (agents who also own production companies) have too much "clout". He foresees a situation in which agent-producers package their stars and production company together so that a broadcaster could not take one without the other. Alan Yentob notes that in America, while agents

are powerful brokers of deals, agent-producers are not allowed because it is recognised that this would mean a conflict of interests and a monopoly situation.

[8]Of course, "big names" alone do not guarantee success. Robinson (1986, November 18) refers to the infamous *TV-am* example, claiming that *TV-am* was an edifice constructed entirely out of television personalities: the "Famous Five" which included David Frost, Angela Rippon, and Anna Ford. Robinson remarks, "£15 million staked on the assumption that a bouquet of well-known faces was all you needed to be made welcome in every home."

[9]Writing in *The Guardian*, Simon Fanshawe (1999, June 16) touches on the differences between stars and celebrities. It is claimed that stars are inaccessible, awesome, icons, and god-like in their fame; celebrities are accessible, ordinary, human, and mortal.

[10]Interviewing Noel Edmonds for Channel 5, Kirsty Young indicates her surprise that he does not have an agent and has always managed his own career (Tulloh, 1998, August 30). She says that this is surely unique as she cannot think of anyone else in broadcasting who is in this position. Edmonds explains that he does not want to be part of a "stable of stars", and in fact he now has his own company, which represents a small number of very different people. Edmonds is also unusual because he does not often do interviews. He claims to be a private person who does not like having his photograph taken and talking about himself all the time. When Young points out that we never see his family, he replies that they are not "accessories to his career" and he says he despises those people who "troll the family out". Yet despite his not having a manager, his lack of personal publicity, and his reluctance to talk about his private, family life, Noel Edmonds is a very successful personality.

[11]It could be argued that the management process is more generally associated with the music industry as it has been going on at a sophisticated level for longer in this field: yet even here it has been the subject of little academic discussion. When Johnny Rogan (1989) wrote a history of British pop management from the 1950s to the 1980s, he claimed it was an area that had never been adequately explored in the many publications about music. In the introduction to his book, he states:

> Virtually every major artiste that I had previously written about was the beneficiary of strong managerial direction and, in many respects, their success was the product of someone else's vision. Remarkably, however, these architects of fame had either been completely forgotten or ludicrously undervalued.

To rectify this, Rogan compiled case studies of managers, which he presents as seventeen case study chapters. He says that although all managers perform a range of similar functions (in a later chapter he outlines these and lists nine elements of successful pop management), their individual strategies are often very different. Rogan describes a number of the most common managerial types, identifying thirteen recognizable categories or "paradigms of pop management", but claims that the autocratic entrepreneur is still the image that the public most readily associates with the term "pop manager" (p.275). This type of manager treats his artistes as pure commodity and values commercial demands over artistic progress. That this is the impression

commonly held of pop managers is interesting in light of the media discourse that surrounds the management of personality presenters: as shall be seen in the case of Peter Powell, the "Svengali" label is often applied here too.

[12]Some bands make little or no effort to conceal their manufactured nature. For instance, a record company's attempts to put together the "boy band" *Upside Down* were followed for an *Inside Story* documentary programme (Cohen & Perrin, 1996, January 18). It has been claimed that *Herman's Hermits* was the original manufactured British pop band (Brown, 1996, May 21). The group sold 50 million records in the late 1960s and was a phenomenon in America. Yet despite their success, its members were never taken seriously by the music press in this country because they were regarded as puppets.

[13]Having highlighted that Powell and Lindsay are businessmen looking for profit, it may be worth mentioning that another market which looked to be fertile was that of professional rugby: a scene James Grant Management also became involved in for a while (Cleary, 1996, October 13). Martin Kelner reported, somewhat sarcastically, that rugby players are "being marketed by a disc jockey" and continued that, having scoured the country looking for people who might prove good commercial prospects, "The Next Big Thing, Powell has decided, will be rugby union and especially Phil de Glanville" (1997, October 6). *The Rugby Club*, BBC2's fly-on-the-wall documentary series following the fortunes of Bath rugby club, briefly featured team captain Phil de Glanville visiting his agent (Shearman, 1997, October 1). Powell explained that about 18 months earlier, believing sport to be the fastest growing form of entertainment, the company had set out to identify which sport and which names. They came up with rugby and the players Phil de Glanville, Lawrence Dallaglio, Andy Gomarsall, and Alex King: all of whom became clients. Elsewhere, with reference to managing rugby players, Russ Lindsay is quoted as saying, "The quick buck is not the answer. Our experience in show business has taught us that lesson. Those agents who seek to do that will kill off the game" (Cleary, 1995, December 3). Indeed an article by Mick Cleary soon after expressed concerns for the future of rugby now that agents are involved and it has become "a whole new ball game" (1995, December 31).

[14]Rogan (1989) explains that, "the original svengali, created by George Du Maurier in the novel *Trilby* and later immortalized in the 1931 movie *Svengali*, was a brilliant but ruthlessly maleficent hypnotist whose subjects obeyed his every command" (p.273).

[15]This problem is also identified by Peter Popham (1996, November 29) in *The Independent*.

CHAPTER THREE

CASE STUDY: PHILLIP SCHOFIELD

Introduction

This chapter is a case study of the media persona Phillip Schofield. It aims to illuminate and interrogate some key concepts that have been introduced in this thesis. Applying these concepts to new and different areas - considered here in relation to children's television, young people's popular culture, and fandom - takes them further than has been done so in media studies before.

The case study begins by briefly outlining the biography of the media personality at the centre of this chapter. After this, a concise history of children's radio and television presentation is given, so that Schofield's role and style as a children's presenter may be explained. The chapter goes on to consider the genre of Saturday morning television which sees children's broadcasting interacting with the wider commercial popular culture of young people: that seen in teenage magazines and shared by Radio 1. Contextualized in this way, Schofield's unprecedented place within this market is then elaborated. The chapter proceeds to examine Schofield as part of broadcasting's personality system, focusing in particular on his persona, as constructed through subsidiary forms of circulation. The tension he experienced being characterised as "clean", and the potential contradiction here with his being "sexy", are highlighted, as is the difficulty he faced with his more mature persona.

Throughout this chapter the sources referred to with regard to Schofield are drawn from material accumulated, as a fan, over a twelve-year period (1986-1998). This extensive archive - which has been supplemented through contact with other fans - includes sixteen scrapbooks containing the vast majority of subsidiary circulation available to the

public during this time, and programmes from all Schofield's television and radio series. Gathered through fandom, of advantage is the thorough and conscientious effort behind the collection; a disadvantage is the fact that, cut out and stuck into a scrapbook or part of a compilation video, references are not always complete. On occasion statements are made below based on the surveying of this rich and detailed archive as a whole. Specific references have been selected on the basis that they are believed to be the best with which to illustrate the points being made. Of primary interest, certainly in the latter part of the chapter, are subsidiary forms of circulation such as magazine interviews and newspaper articles because it is here that Schofield's persona is produced and maintained.

Phillip Schofield: A Brief Biography[1]

Phillip Schofield was born in 1962, in Oldham, but he grew up in Newquay where his parents ran a B&B. Schofield claims that by the age of ten he had decided he would like to pursue a career in broadcasting, and that from then on he wrote regularly to the BBC asking for their advice. When he was seventeen, Schofield was offered a job as a bookings clerk in the Radio Outside Broadcast department of the BBC's Broadcasting House in London. He had been working at Broadcasting House for two years when he decided to leave to join his family who were emigrating to New Zealand. It was there that Schofield's career took off. Responding to an advertisement in the local newspaper, he successfully auditioned for a job fronting Television New Zealand's new weekly pop show, *Shazam*. Soon he also began presenting a Sunday morning radio programme for an Auckland station. After three and a half years in New Zealand, Schofield returned to Britain with his family.

Schofield had kept in touch with Radio 1 DJ Peter Powell, a contact he had made while working at Broadcasting House, and on his return to London, Powell and his partner Russ Lindsay immediately began managing Schofield. They found him work on London's Capital Radio and holiday relief on Sky Channel. In August 1985, Schofield was hired as a linkman to front Children's BBC, and it was in this role that he became a familiar face in many homes throughout the UK. He presented Children's BBC on weekday afternoons for two years before moving to Saturday morning television. Schofield co-hosted *Going Live* for six series from 1987 until 1993. In addition, he joined BBC Radio 1 in August 1988 and presented two shows per week. He also hosted a number of weeks on the Radio 1 summer roadshow (from 1989-1991) before giving up his place on the station's team in March 1992. In 1993 Schofield left the BBC and moved to ITV, where he has since presented a number of new series in the light entertainment "family" genre: *Talking Telephone Numbers*, *Schofield's Quest*, *Schofield's TV Gold*, *Tenball*, and *One in a Million*. He has additionally presented a number of one-off special programmes for the channel.

Alongside his broadcasting career, Schofield has also worked in popular theatre. In 1992 he took over the lead role in Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Schofield played *Joseph* at the London Palladium and toured with the show in the UK and Ireland until 1996. In 1998 a new musical, *Doctor Dolittle*, opened in London with Schofield in the lead role. The show's producers, the James Grant Media Group, are his managers.

Schofield married in 1993, and has two daughters (born 1993 and 1996). The family lives in Oxfordshire. As shall be demonstrated later in this chapter, Schofield's family life is a significant aspect of his persona.

Children's Television Presentation

In her book *Into the Box of Delights: A History of Children's Television*, Anna Home (1993), Head of Children's Programmes at the BBC, remarks that in the early days of television, children's programmes were linked by a live presenter (p.26). In 1949 this was a fourteen-year-old schoolgirl called Jennifer Gay. Home explains that from the mid-1960s on however this approach became unfashionable as it was considered too cosy and soft. The idea of having a live presenter was revived again in the 1980s when the BBC, losing out badly to competition from Children's ITV, needed a new look. In Home's book, 1985 is marked as a major milestone in children's programming with the introduction of Children's BBC (CBBC) presided over by twenty-three-year-old Phillip Schofield (p.171).

Schofield sat behind the presentation desk used by continuity announcers. Announcers link all programmes: the difference here was that Schofield was in-vision. The idea behind his links was to discourage viewers from changing channel between shows. As John Craven explained, "Phillip pops up between programmes to chat about what's on next and what to look forward to. Sometimes he gets time to read viewers' letters (his post-bag gets bigger every day), and on Tuesdays he checks through the latest pop charts" (1985, October 12-18). Crucially, perhaps the overwhelming feature of this set-up was its intimacy and personal feel. The location was not a studio and, nicknamed

"The Broom Cupboard", there was only one fixed camera positioned just inches from Schofield. He would address this directly and his talk was unscripted, which gave him the opportunity to appear spontaneous, chatty, chummy, and, importantly, to seem to "be himself".

Stephen Wagg (1992) considers how British broadcasting addresses children and examines historically how this has developed. In his essay he explains that the style of presentation adopted reflects the assumptions the programme-makers of the time have about the nature of children. As broadcasters' working notions of childhood change across the decades, so too does the content of children's programming. Thus, for instance, the Uncles and Aunties of the early BBC encapsulated the corporation's middle-class Reithian culture, and the ideals of activity and improvement that surrounded childhood were evident in radio's *Children's Hour* (first broadcast in 1922).[2] Wagg's argument is that, with the commercialisation of childhood, the media have increasingly defined and addressed children as consumers: This current conceptualisation of the child audience member will be discussed more fully in the next section of this chapter. The position proposed in this thesis is that changes to children's broadcasting and its mode of address have been for the better.

Wagg notes that the early practice of giving the broadcasters nicknames - usually Uncle or Auntie[3] - was partly "an attempt to distance *Children's Hour* from the formality of the schoolroom" (p.154). According to Susan Briggs (1981, p.97), the presenters of *Children's Hour* prided themselves on their informality as they did not want to be like schoolteachers. Yet despite this, she says that, "it was certainly true that the programme itself often sounded as if it were run by prep school masters. 'Uncle Mac' himself, much

loved as he was, could both sound and read schoolmasterly and was rather patronising . . ." (p.93). The problem here seems to be the age and the bearing conveyed in the voices of the broadcasters.

Carrying out research for the European Broadcasting Union, Grant Noble (1975) examined the children's television programme *Blue Peter* in 1968. As part of the study he considered the roles of the presenters: Peter Purves, Valerie Singleton, and John Noakes. His first objective was to establish the intentions of the programme's producers. He discovered that Peter's allotted role was that of father, Valerie was to be seen as an elder sister or the older girl next door, and John was to be thought of as an older brother (pp.181-182). These intentions were then evaluated by asking the children interviewed for the study how they perceived the roles of the three personas. When Peter was recognised as extended kin, he was indeed seen to be "like daddy" (p.187). As for Valerie, "A quarter of the children recognised her as like someone they knew but not as an elder sister, since the majority saw her as an 'auntie' and a few as 'mummy'" (ibid.). A quarter of the children said that John was like an elder brother, an uncle, or a friend. According to Noble, John was "seen as being fairly close in age and interests to the viewing children" (ibid.), and this seems to be due to his being regarded as "naughty". Interestingly, John was by far the most liked presenter (61%), followed in popularity by Valerie (27%), and then Peter (8%) (p.196).[4]

Although John Noakes was actually in his thirties when he presented *Blue Peter*, the evidence above suggests that the move towards more youthful presenters was a wise one for broadcasters to take. Wagg outlines the changing face of the children's presenter since the early days of radio as follows:

> In the 1920s and 1930s such people were men and women of early middle age who styled themselves 'Uncle' and 'Auntie'. By the late 1950s, this age group was beginning to be considered unviable for the task: the first presenters of *Blue Peter*, in 1958, were a male of twenty-five (Christopher Trace) and female of twenty-one (Leila Williams). By the 1980s, this age, or the appearance of it, was the norm for children's magazine programmes: when Yvette Fielding was recruited to present *Blue Peter* in 1987 she was only eighteen. 'Right now', said Andy Crane, twenty-seven-year-old (but looking younger) presenter of *Children's BBC* and *Motormouth* recently, 'I think that me and Philip Schofield are like older brothers to the viewers' (*Guardian*, 27 September 1991:38). (1992, p.168)

A very similar quote from Andy Crane (who took over from Schofield in CBBC presentation) was given in *The Mail on Sunday*: "'Children's presenters are now like your older brother and sister,' says Crane. 'And we do everything that you would expect your older brother and sister to do'" (McKay, 1992, January 12).

This recognised move to youthfulness reflects a crucial point: previously when addressing children, broadcasters took the part of the adult - 'aunties' and 'uncles' talked to their 'nephews' and 'nieces' - but nowadays presenters can talk to their audience as near contemporaries.[5] Furthermore, as near contemporaries, they can claim to share the interests of their young viewers: to listen to the same music, watch the same films, wear the same fashions, and so on. This point about egalitarianism is made by David Buckingham (1995), who says that, "At least outwardly, children's TV in Britain seems to have thrown off the legacy of paternalism and adopted a much more egalitarian address to the viewer" (p.50). He notes the shift from the parental figures of his own childhood viewing, to the younger, less formal children's presenters now preferred. With regard to *Blue Peter*, Buckingham states that, "Surrogate mothers or fathers have been banished in favour of trendy older brothers and sisters, who readily make fools of themselves and profess to share their viewers' enthusiasms for pop stars and TV

entertainment" (ibid.), and he recognises that this change has taken place across children's programming.

Schofield's performance was that of "the older brother" identified above, a presentation style which was firmly established at Buckingham's time of writing. However when Schofield started out a decade earlier, he was one of the first to take this approach as we now know it, and subsequent presenters, following his path, have adopted his manner.[6] Previously perhaps only Keith Chegwin had been sufficiently boyish to fulfil the older brother role: having trained to be an actor, Chegwin started working on *Multi-coloured Swap Shop* when he was just nineteen. Yet, while the closest the BBC had come to an egalitarian style before Schofield was on Saturday morning television, Chegwin's co-hosts (Noel Edmonds and Mike Read) were nonetheless more mature and adult-like: albeit they were grown-ups "at play".

The evidence is that Schofield was popular with his audience and he soon started winning many awards.[7] When he was a guest on BBC1's daytime show about television, *Open Air*, on 29 March 1989, a fourteen-year-old caller asked Schofield what he thought it was that made him appeal to children. When asked why she liked him, she replied, "I think he says things that we'll understand without patronising us, and he's very good looking, and he's friendly and chatty." In response, Schofield said the worst criticism that could be made of him would be that he was patronising or condescending. This is something he reiterated throughout his career. It is interesting that this echoes Home's prescription for a children's presenter. Home (1993) says it is hard to define what makes a good children's presenter but that personality is obviously important. She goes on to say that, "Above all, they should not patronize. Talking down is the cardinal

sin of children's presenters" (p.159). Schofield projects being genuine as the key to his success, arguing that his young viewers would see straight through him otherwise, and insisting, "I really am the same person off screen as on" (Wark, 1989, November 7, p.21).

Buckingham (1995) notes the "cultivated *appearance* of spontaneity" (p.51, emphasis in original) in contemporary children's television. He suggests that this exercise is about reducing the differences between the adult presenter and the child viewer by effacing signs of adult power and control:

> We're just kids like you, the presenters seem to be saying. We can make fools of ourselves, but we just don't care. We may have been let loose in a studio with a few million pounds' worth of equipment, but we're just having fun. We're not boring grown-ups who are going to teach you things or tell you how to behave. We're just *playing* at TV. (ibid.)

Buckingham has in mind here entertainment magazine programmes such as those broadcast on Saturday mornings (which are mostly studio-based and linked by a team of presenters). The next section of this chapter concentrates on this genre.

Saturday Morning Television

Wagg (1992, p.163) explains that since the 1950s broadcasters have recognised children as a market: as viewers with preferences and as purchasers.[8] Although, until recently, *Blue Peter* upheld an ideology of anti-commercialism, elsewhere programme-makers tended to address young audiences as consumers and to promote a commercial culture

for children.[9] As Wagg seems to suggest, this is seen most clearly in Saturday morning magazine programmes.

BBC1's *Multi-Coloured Swap Shop* began in 1976 in response to *Tiswas*, which had started regionally on ITV the previous year.[10] *Swap Shop* was originally supposed to run for only six weeks, but lasted for six years, and established the Saturday morning format. Featuring phone-ins, letters, competitions, cartoons, and guests, this has changed relatively little over twenty years. Each generation has however had its own show with its own presenters (who reflect the developments discussed in the previous section). Noel Edmonds, John Craven (*Newsround*), Keith Chegwin, and Maggie Philbin presented *Swap Shop* (1976-1982). In 1982 Mike Read opened *Saturday Superstore*, and his co-hosts were John Craven, Keith Chegwin, and Sarah Greene (ex-*Blue Peter*). *Saturday Superstore* (1982-1987) was replaced by *Going Live* (1987-1993) with Phillip Schofield and Sarah Greene. Its successor, *Live and Kicking*, was presented by Andi Peters and Emma Forbes, then Zoë Ball and Jamie Theakston. Though the format of these live shows has remained similar, each incarnation has evolved to suit the particular era in which it belongs, and is thus very much of its time (as reflected in the design of the set, fashion of the presenters, and look of the programme). For instance, *Going Live* took advantage of technological developments to enable callers to participate in a computer game on air, and to make surprise visits to viewers at home. The pace at which the programmes move has also speeded up considerably.[11]

According to Wagg, Saturday morning television programmes "illustrate a number of important and decisive departures from the traditional childhood of the broadcasting 'hearth'" (p.165), and he goes on to highlight some of these. Firstly, he asserts that

children are assumed to be active principally in relation to consumption, and that this consumption is mainly of media products: thus their activity involves buying, listening, and watching. Indeed this is reflected in the fact that much - though by no means all[12] - of the content of a show like *Going Live* is made up of pop stars with a new single to promote, interviews with actors and presenters from other television programmes, reviews of films, videos, and computer games, and so on. As is also pointed out, these programmes include cartoons that are heavily merchandised. Wagg notes that the centrality of commercial discourse in *Going Live* was acknowledged in 1990 by the Office of Fair Trading when they used Phillip Schofield and Sarah Greene to promote a magazine called *VFM* (Value for Money), which was aimed at the 'Young Consumer'. Secondly, Wagg emphasises that:

> these programmes borrow heavily from, and mesh into, pop culture. The presenters of *Swap Shop* and *Superstore*, Noel Edmonds and Mike Read respectively, were both, initially, disc jockeys. . . . the programmes presuppose children as *fans* and, especially in the case of girls, the spontaneous squeals of the 1950s and 1960s have become routinized: they're expected. . . . Having some star or other as an object of adoration was as normal for a pre-teenage girl in the 1980s and 1990s as having a pet rabbit was in the 1950s . . . (p.166)

Thirdly, he highlights the satirical humour that is present in these shows. There is an element of self-consciousness in a programme like *Going Live*, and Wagg suggests that "the discourse of the presenters has become reflexively ironic" (p.167). He points out that much of the comedy of *Going Live*'s resident comedians, Trevor and Simon, "plays off the idea of the young, media-wise consumer fan" (ibid.), with many of their routines including media references. To add to Wagg's point, one performance Trevor and Simon could give was being patronising: for instance, the characters in one of their weekly sketches would talk down to "the viewers at home" and ask them "to join in" by

singing along. They are aware that the audience will appreciate the humour in their sending-up presenters from an earlier age of children's television or from programmes aimed at much younger children.

Wagg stresses his observation that "these programmes are substantially about the media themselves. The subject matter (the latest records, CDs, videos, films and TV programmes) and the discourse - the phrase 'going live', for example - are drawn from the media" (p.168). He links to this the fact that "behind the scenes" is visible in this genre. *Going Live*, and shows like it, are part of what Wagg calls a "self-referential media culture" (p.169), where the world of the mass media happily discusses itself. Buckingham (1995), who states that many children's programmes are now a celebration of popular culture, echoes this view. He continues:

> Indeed, many of these programmes often seem to take place within an entirely mediated world. The guests who venture into the studio of *Going Live* or *Parallel Nine* are most likely to be pop stars, actors from other shows or even presenters from other children's programmes. Much of the humour of these programmes is based on a knowing mockery of other media genres and conventions, for example in the case of *Parallel Nine*'s 'Parallel Playback' (a game show played in reverse) or the antics of Trev and Simon on *Going Live*. In some cases - most notably with *Disney Club* - the programme appears to be little more than an extended advertisement for other media-related merchandise. (pp.50-51)

This is television about television and the endless consumption of the media world. Reva Klein (1990, p.108) points out that television offers children a common cultural language. This idea can be taken further to argue that a programme like *Going Live* not only offers but also *speaks* this common cultural language. It talks about what children talk about: pop groups, computer games, the latest trend, and so on. Buckingham also picks up on the related point about "behind the scenes", saying that:

> Many of these programmes, and the continuity sequences that surround them, not only provide a considerable amount of 'behind the scenes' information about how television is made but also draw attention to their own production processes - or what in *Screen*-speak used to be called 'foregrounding the device'. (1995, p.51)

Going Live always highlighted its studio setting and showed the production team. Schofield would inform the audience of instructions he was receiving from the gallery through his earpiece and would sometimes answer them back; he would talk to and involve the crew, on occasion even swapping places with the cameraman. The production team was acknowledged to such an extent that an assistant floor manager turned into something of a star. Simon Foster received fan mail including a poem from some fans during the fourth series. As a result, that year he even appeared in *Going Live*'s Christmas Panto (Bellinger, 1990, December 29) and was chosen to be made "Mr Spoons" when DJ Steve Wright appeared on the show (Bellinger, 1991, January 5).

This camaraderie ties in with the appearance of spontaneity, the playing around, characteristic of this genre: as referred to in the section above. When *The 8:15 from Manchester* - the show that replaced *Going Live* over the summer months - began its 1990 series with a behind the scenes look at *Going Live*, the presenter asked Schofield and Greene for advice. Schofield replied, "Just have a good time, basically. That's what we do. That's it . . . we come in here on a Saturday morning, it's not like going to work. It's like coming out to play," and Greene added, "It's like coming to see your friends really" (1990, April 21). Years later when Schofield appeared as a guest on *Going Live*'s successor, he was billed as "an old friend of Studio 7" (*Live and Kicking*, 1995, December 9).

Schofield's Intertextuality

Wagg's arguments about the media, popular culture, and consumption are extremely useful in understanding "The Schofield Phenomenon" that came about in the latter half of the 1980s and lasted through the early 1990s. In particular, Wagg's discussion can be developed to help explain Schofield's unprecedented intertextuality. *Going Live* was a programme about the popular culture of young people, and was itself part of this mainstream, commercial, cultural world: so too was its presenter Phillip Schofield. This enabled Schofield to be appropriated with ease into the various media that were being consumed by young people (i.e., the audience and potential viewers of *Going Live*).

For instance, Saturday morning television and BBC Radio 1 share a similar target audience. Like Noel Edmonds and Mike Read before him, and Zoë Ball and Jamie Theakston after him, Schofield fitted in to both. Schofield's Sunday afternoon radio show was called *Going Live on Radio 1*. A mixture of music and chat, like its television counterpart it featured phone-ins, competitions, and guests from throughout the media world. He also hosted a weekly request programme on Thursday evenings during which listeners' letters were read out. And he filled in for Simon Mayo on the Breakfast Show on several occasions. As a member of Radio 1's team, Schofield presented the Radio 1 summer roadshow for a week in August 1989. The following two summers (1990 and 1991), he was the only DJ to do two weeks of the tour, such was the size of the crowd he drew and the popularity of his roadshows.

It should be remembered that Schofield's own presenting background was in pop: *Shazam*, the television programme he hosted for three years in New Zealand, was a pop

magazine show which he describes as "like a mixture of *Top of the Pops* and *Saturday Superstore*" (Craven, 1985, October 12-18). On his return to the UK his audition tape was sent to BBC Manchester for the music show *No Limits* but he was turned down (reputedly because he had the wrong colour hair!). The director there did however send the tape to London in the knowledge that they were looking for someone to front CBBC.

Having argued that Schofield was part of the mainstream, commercial, cultural world of youngsters, it should be noted that the other programmes he presented were *about* this popular culture. Beginning in 1988, he hosted a new quiz show on Children's BBC called *The Movie Game*. As its title suggests, this competition for schoolchildren was based around film and the cinema. Schofield also fronted a number of series of *Take Two* (1986-1991), a review programme about television. Furthermore, before *Going Live*, his involvement in *Saturday Superstore* had been presenting a regular slot about television, *TV Talkback*. While a children's presenter, he also introduced the BBC's occasional *Disneytime*, linking cartoon clips around various themes.

In 1989 the BBC (addressing its audience as media consumers) launched a new children's magazine called *Fast Forward*. Its content was made up of news, features, and gossip about the channel's children's programmes and presenters, about Radio 1, and about pop stars like Jason Donovan and Kylie Minogue - in others words, the cultural world shared by *Going Live*. Schofield and Sarah Greene often appeared on the front cover. *Fast Forward* joined the many magazines aimed at youngsters that frequently featured Schofield in the expectation he would be popular with their readers.[13] For instance, *Jackie* magazine said, "Phillip Schofield's your favourite telly chap at the moment so we had to have a word with him and find out what's so great

about his job (well, he's always smiling isn't he?!)" ("My brilliant career," 1987, September 5).

Paul Willis (1990) discusses the magazine market for young people. He explains that it is "a post-war phenomenon, developing in tandem with the expansion of particular commodity markets, records, fashion, make-up and toiletries, targeted at the newly discovered affluent youth market" (p.53), and outlines how the magazine market was reshaped in the early 1980s with the launch of several new titles and changes in production. One of these changes included the fact that parts of the magazines now "link up with a variety of other media" (ibid.). Although Willis claims that gender differences in the readership of certain publications are diminishing, others in the market are clearly divided along gender lines. Some of the magazines Schofield appeared in, like *Jackie*, *Just Seventeen*, *Mizz*, and *My Guy*, were intended for girls and included items on fashion, beauty, and advice; others, namely *Number One*, *Smash Hits*, *Big!*, *TV Hits*, and *Fast Forward*, were designed for both genders and their content was organised around the media and music. Most of the earliest articles about Schofield concentrated on how he got into television or "looked behind the scenes" at CBBC. Later readers were taken behind the scenes at *Going Live* and then Radio 1 (and the roadshows). It was assumed that they wanted to know about Schofield's career and had an interest in the media.[14]

It was also presupposed by the magazines he appeared in (e.g., *Patches*, *Girl*, *Blue Jeans*) that, as an attractive young man, Schofield would be a fanciable figure and an object of adoration for their female readers: and so he often appeared in posters and pin-up pictures. Wagg (1992) mentions the steady trend, which had its beginnings in pop

music, toward greater sensuality in children's popular culture (p.159). Likewise it was assumed that Schofield would have fans. It is proposed that this is where he was breaking new ground: never before had there been a television presenter in this role. Schofield had young, screaming, fainting fans in a way that had previously been almost exclusively the reserve of pop stars. Similar forms of fandom were experienced earlier by Radio 1 DJs. Mike Read, Gary Davies, and Bruno Brookes had fans and featured to a certain extent as pin-ups in magazines. However the main difference in their case seems to lie with the audience they appealed to. According to the fans interviewed for this research project, when these DJs made personal appearances, while they had a huge turn out, it was apparent that their following consisted of older women, not girls.

The subject of fandom, Schofield did not look out of place in a magazine like *Smash Hits*. An issue from 1987 did declare, "What is Phillip Schofield doing on the cover of Smash Hits?!!" and inside asked, "Who *is* this bloke who interviews pop stars on his TV show *Going Live* every Saturday?" (Borg, 1987, November 18-December 1). The fact that the feature also makes it clear the interview is being carried out in Radio 1 DJ Peter Powell's house seems to lend credibility. After this introduction Schofield appeared unquestioned in the magazine, and in fact did well in a number of their popularity polls: for example, he was voted "Most Fanciable Male" in *The 8th Annual Smash Hits Readers' Poll* (1987, December 16-29), beating off competition from pop stars like Morten Harket and George Michael, and film stars such as Tom Cruise and Michael J. Fox. It is interesting to note that Schofield was the only media personality to appear in this category and evidence suggests he was probably the first to do so: no television or radio presenters – not even a Radio 1 DJ – were listed among the Top 10 Most

Fanciable Males for the previous four years. The issue of Schofield's status as a heart-throb shall be returned to later.

Part of the realm of *Smash Hits*, Schofield hosted *The Smash Hits Poll Winners' Party* - an award ceremony including performances from pop acts - broadcast live on BBC television in 1988, 1989, 1990, and 1991. He presented lesser-profiled "shows" for two other magazines as well. He compèred the *Just Seventeen* Roadshow 1991 tour at venues throughout the UK, and he was involved in a roadshow at the "Fun Days" held by *Fast Forward* magazine in 1990 and 1991 (to raise money for the charity Childline). Likewise, no doubt his "great teen appeal" motivated Andrew Lloyd Webber to consider Schofield as a suitable replacement for Jason Donovan in *Joseph* in 1991: as suggested by David Mellor (1998, April 26) on *Classic fm*.

When the BBC launched its fifth radio station in August 1990, Schofield was one of the personalities whose name was used for publicity in an attempt to reach the target audience. Wanting to appeal to young listeners, Radio 5 was advertised in magazines like *Fast Forward* and Schofield was used as a "selling point". He appeared on the front cover of *Fast Forward* where it was declared, "On air! Phillip Schofield, Caron Keating, Mark Curry and Gazza launch Radio 5" (1990, August 29–September 4). Schofield was strongly associated with the station despite the fact that he was not to be a presenter and all he was actually doing was reading a story on one edition of the daily *Celebrity Stories* programme. He did appear as a guest on other Radio 5 programmes (such as *Take Two* and *Euromix*) over the course of the next year and read stories on several occasions.

Not unlike launching a radio station, Schofield was used in a number of campaigns aimed at young people, such was his connection with this section of the population. Wagg (1992) refers to his association with the Office of Fair Trading's "Value for Money" campaign targeting young consumers. "Which Way Now: Options 90" (for the Employment Department Group) and "Moneyfax" (for the Office of Fair Trading in 1991) were two Radio 1 campaigns he was involved in. Schofield helped a government minister launch a new "Be Safe Be Seen" campaign (in October 1991) and he also supported the campaign to encourage young people to wear cycling helmets run by *Halfords* and *Fast Forward* (in August 1992).

This thesis has been arguing that Schofield circulated in a certain sphere of commercial popular culture. This is also reflected in the fact that his young fans were encouraged to consume a variety of products that crossed different mediums. Several books for children were published, such as *The Phillip Schofield Fun File* (in 1988) and *The Second Phillip Schofield Fun File* (in 1989), and he wrote introductions to others. His first video *A Day at the Zoo with Phillip Schofield* was released in September 1989. In 1990 a number of the "adventure films" he had made for *Going Live* were compiled on video. *The Phillip Schofield Pop Video Show: Volume 1* also came out in 1990, as did a series of *The Best Children's TV of the Decade* videos in which he introduced clips from shows of the 60s and 70s. He narrated Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* on a new EMI recording released in 1992, and also that year he read a version of the story of *Joseph* for The Speaking Book Company. There was a Phillip Schofield calendar for the year 1991 and the *Phillip Schofield Official Annual* in 1993.

However at the conclusion of this section on Schofield's intertextuality, it must be stressed that as a media personality he was of interest to a wider audience than his principal market, and therefore he did not only appear in subsidiary forms of circulation aimed at youngsters. Schofield featured regularly in TV guides, in tabloid newspapers, in Sunday supplements, and in publications intended for older women (e.g., *Woman*, *CHAT*, *Women's World*). The latter's interest seems to have been in Schofield as an ideal son type figure: for instance, in a feature to mark Mother's Day in 1990, Schofield and his mum appeared together in (and on the front cover of) *Woman* magazine. They talked about each other and their relationship, and Schofield was photographed presenting his mum with a big bunch of flowers. This double page feature was headlined "Guess who's so perfect, he was even born on Mother's Day!" (King, 1990, March 26). Schofield also guested on various programmes like *Wogan*, *Blankety Blank*, and *Holiday*. He always insisted that *Going Live* was not "children's television", but that it was a magazine programme for whoever was up and watching on a Saturday morning (as, for instance, when interviewed on *This Morning* on 16 December 1993). Indeed when the show ended, the two letters mourning its loss printed in the *Radio Times* were from writers aged 34 and 20. The former ends:

> *Going Live!* was not merely a children's programme: it was an excellent example of what TV can be - with the right team. I would like to say a big thank you to the presenters Phillip [Schofield] and Sarah [Greene] who, after six years in my living room, seem like friends. Sadly, Saturdays will not be the same for many of us. ("Letters(a)," 1993, May 8-14)

As the following quote from Schofield himself also suggests, it was not only teenage girls who formed para-social relationships with him:

> I quite often get people coming up and talking to me as if we're long-lost mates and I get people from right across the board - teenage girls, mums and dads and then their brothers. If you can get a seventeen-year-old bloke saying, "Hi Phil, how are you?", that's great because it's very uncool for people like that to like someone like me. ("I brought BBC1," 1989, October)

This point about Schofield being "uncool" shall be returned to later when his persona is discussed.

Schofield as part of Broadcasting's Personality System

It is significant that, although he was part of the media world of young people and could appear at ease alongside pop stars, film stars, and soap stars, Schofield was nonetheless part of broadcasting's personality system. This fact determined the *way* in which he was featured in subsidiary forms of circulation. Schofield was surrounded by those discourses applied to the television and radio personality. In interviews he himself reproduced the professional ideology of "being a broadcasting personality". As examined in Chapter One of this thesis, central here are ideas about being yourself, being genuine, authentic, down-to-earth, ordinary, homely, and so on.

As was also highlighted in Chapter One, subsidiary forms of circulation are important in the process of making personalities accessible, knowable, and familiar. Studying the archive of material, it is apparent that throughout his career Schofield was presented in these terms. In addition to the features about his programmes (referred to above), in many interviews and articles the main focus was on Schofield the person, and the private and the intimate were highlighted. On several occasions he was featured at home: for example, in *Mizz*, a magazine for teenage girls, readers were given a tour of

Schofield's living room (Husband, 1987, July 15-28). This had been advertised in the previous issue with a full-page photograph of him in the shower. Overall, the subsidiary material around Schofield provided an opportunity for audiences to learn more about him, "to get to know him even better", and thus, it could be said, to enhance their para-social relationship with him.[15]

Often interviews were concerned with revealing the "real" Schofield, whom readers were led to believe was no different from the person they saw on television. In a typical piece, headlined "Introducing the real Phillip Schofield", he is quoted as saying, "I'd like to think I don't really have an image, so the person I am on the box is the same person that I am off it" ("Introducing," 1988, February 28). Investigating on their readers' behalf, journalists confirmed his authenticity. In a *Smash Hits* cover feature, for example, interviewer Lola Borg states that "in real life he is *exactly* the way he is on television" (1987, November 18–December 1). A magazine called *Eleven* (1988) quotes Schofield as saying, "There are supposedly television training courses, which I don't believe in, because you can train someone in the technique, looking into the right camera and so on, but you can't actually train them to look natural and be themselves." Here too the writer agrees that Schofield's screen appearances are "definitely not an act". Schofield has said, "You've got to relax, be yourself . . . I'm me and I can't and won't change for journalists" (Marson, 1989, October). Rarely have journalists expressed real scepticism. Notably though when *You* magazine featured an interview conducted at home with Schofield and included photographs of him around his flat, Angela Levin reported that, "at first, interviewing him was like being granted an audience with Barbie doll's boyfriend, Ken. His responses were plastic, his gestures controlled and his smile switched on and off without disturbing his looks in any way" (1988, June, p.58). She

also comments, "I couldn't work out whether his naivety was genuine and part of the reason for his success with children, or part of a cultivated image" (p.60). Schofield is later quoted as saying, "If you create an image for yourself, you have to keep it up. It's too much trouble" (ibid.). This would suggest that her hypothesis about a cultivated image is false, *but only*, of course, if readers accept Schofield's statement as true.

Schofield's Persona

In line with the notion of authenticity expressed above, Schofield has always maintained that, beyond being a responsible children's broadcaster, he has never deliberately presented himself in a certain way. Yet it is clear that he does have an image: an image which, he claims, was created for him by the press. Indeed, through subsidiary forms of circulation, Schofield's image was established as that of "the boy-next-door". Clearly this relates to the fact that he was working in children's television and is consistent with his style of presentation as "the older brother".

Of course, as discussed earlier in this thesis, a celebrity's persona is not defined by their professional life alone: their private life is vital to their public identity. In Schofield's case, his apparently mundane and unremarkable personal life contributed to this boy-next-door persona. Schofield was dubbed "Mr Nice Guy" and was characterised as clean. While he insisted his lifestyle was that of the average person in their twenties, the uncontroversial character of his private life was highlighted. For instance, in one magazine article entitled "Too good to be true?", Jane Patterson (1989) stated that, "And try as they might, even microscopic investigation by the most vigilant of journalists turns up laundry that is whiter than white every time," and claimed that, "The off-screen

life of Phillip Schofield is well documented and totally unexceptional" (p.8). As Patterson goes on to suggest, this scandal-free reputation is sound marketing sense, since, as a children's presenter, Schofield potentially had a lot to lose were he to misbehave. Behind his own insistence that he does not have what might be considered a "showbiz" lifestyle, and his projection of normality, also seems to lie the notion that this makes for a more stable and longer lasting career. Schofield typically says:

> There's always the risk of being flavour of the month - but it's down to how natural you are. My lifestyle is actually very normal. It's not a case of going out to clubs every night. If you set yourself up to be flavour of the month - or the greatest thing since sliced bread - eventually the bubble will burst. I just love what I'm doing, so there's no need to go out and be anything I'm not. ("The charmer," 1990, April, p.5)

It has been stated earlier in this thesis that "niceness" can be a career enhancement for the type of presenter labelled the boy or girl-next-door. In Schofield's case, it has been claimed that it is his "Mr Nice Guy" image that has companies competing for his services. Noel Edmonds' media manager has been quoted as saying of Schofield that, "Children love him, adults love him. He's a normal down-to-earth bloke" ("The buzz," 1993, April 25). However, established as normal and down-to-earth, his persona provided Schofield with a number of tensions. These are discussed below in sections looking at his ordinariness versus his being cool, being sexy, and being a star.[16]

"Mr Clean"

The first of these tensions relates to the fact that being ordinary ("the boy-next-door") is linked with being nice ("Mr Nice Guy") and being nice is equated with being clean, and for someone immersed in the cultural world of young people, this wholesome image is

not "cool". It seems that this was a source of displeasure for Schofield. Insofar as he was obviously appealing to many young people, to be clean (and not cool) was not a hindrance to his success: in fact it probably boosted his popularity among certain audiences. However Schofield was aware that for every person who liked him, others did not, and he seemed to attribute their dislike to his safe reputation. His displeasure seems to have been compounded by the fact that the clean label used to define him was not only inaccurate but also out of his control.

In a *Woman* magazine article featuring Schofield and Sarah Greene headlined "Sorry, but they are Mr Nice and Mrs Wonderful," Joe Steeples (1989, September 25) wrote of Schofield that, "His image gleams so washtub clean that, to some, it doesn't just squeak, it grates" (p.12). It seems that Schofield himself found it grating because reading the interview further it is clear he is becoming annoyed with his squeaky clean image. In *My Guy*, when asked how he felt about his image, he said:

> My squeaky-clean, Mr Nice image has been created for me - it doesn't exist. I'm not squeaky-clean. It's starting to annoy me now. I do nothing more or nothing less than the average single 27-year-old does. Yes I drink, yes I go out with my mates, yes I have a girlfriend. I am not Mr Goody-Goody! . . . My mates know I'm not squeaky-clean. What am I supposed to do to prove it? (Caddies, 1990, March 15, p.16)

Any claims that he was bad, amounted to very little: as, for example, when the *Sunday Sport* claimed to be telling the "sensational confessions" of Schofield who "hates his too good image" and to be giving its readers "the REAL truth behind the small screen's most sought-after stud" (Malinsky, 1989, October 29). The following month another double page spread, this time in the *Today* newspaper, was headlined "I'm supposed to be so good: (But you should have seen the wild me at my fireworks party, says TV's Phillip)"

(Wark, 1989, November 7). Journalist Penny Wark comments that Schofield is as badly behaved as the average suburban house owner. In an interview in *Just Seventeen* titled "If only people knew what I get up to behind closed doors!", as Yasmin Boland (1991, April) points out, Schofield is obviously still fed up with his uncool goody-two-shoes image. Again however there does not really seem to be much substance to his claims that he can be a "bad lad".

Peter Powell's stag night in January 1990 provided an opportunity for Schofield to present himself in a different light from his usual "Mr Clean". When the drunken party handcuffed Powell to London's Albert Bridge, it was Schofield who called the press and who posed, while he poured a bottle of champagne over his manager's head, for the photographs which appeared in all the tabloids the next day: for example, the *Daily Mirror* (Leigh, 1990, January 22). At the time Schofield seemed to relish in the publicity surrounding the event and to see his squeaky clean reputation tainted. However the initial effects were not long lasting and his image remained unchanged. As he himself later commented (in exaggerated fashion):

> when my manager Pete got married, we all got smashed out of our brains and handcuffed him to the Albert Bridge. And I was written about as 'That lovely boy-next-door who's smashed out of his brains and is chaining his manager to the Albert Bridge! Isn't he sweet?!' I've never done anything 'bad' on purpose, but there are times when I've got myself into trouble and thought 'This is going to *have* to tarnish my goody-goody image slightly' and it's not made a blind bit of difference! (Boland, 1991, April)

So whilst Schofield is willing to insist that his private life is ordinary (in accordance with the ideology of broadcasting's personality system), clearly he is not keen to be

characterised by the "Mr Clean" image that has been created for him, and, despite his attempts, he has been unable to shake off this label.

Defined as "Mr Nice/Clean", anything that might be seen to contradict this was tabloid news. Yet despite highlighting such "uncharacteristic" behaviour, as suggested above by Schofield himself, these incidents had no affect on the way he was categorised by the press thereafter. Such occasions are rare but, for example, when Schofield swore at audience members who threw eggs at *Bros* during a Radio 1 roadshow, it was considered worthy of tabloid reports (e.g., Newman, 1990, August 29). Similarly, a story was made out of the fact that Schofield appeared naked on television. When he carried out an interview in a sauna for the programme in his *Schofield's Europe* series that came from Finland, this was reported as, for example, "Mr Clean's Nude Sauna Shocker" in the *Daily Star*. In this "exclusive" it is claimed that, "Kiddies' favourite Phillip Schofield is set to shatter his Mr Clean image by appearing NUDE on TV" (Wilson, 1990, October 26). Of course, when broadcast (on BBC1 in an early Sunday evening slot), the scene was so appropriate in context that it made no difference to Schofield's reputation at all.

Schofield the Heart-throb

Another tension in Schofield's persona is the potential contradiction between being the ordinary boy-next-door and being a sex symbol.[17] Many young women fancied him. In an interview on the youth magazine show *Network 7* in 1988, it was stated that the sales of *Just Seventeen* go up twenty per cent when he is on the front cover, and the interviewer asked Schofield what it is like to be the main feature of every fourteen-year-

old girl's fantasies (Bancil, 1988, October). When questioned about being "the object of countless adolescent crushes", he would typically say:

> It's very flattering, that's all I've really been able to say about it. I only ever set out to be a TV presenter. I didn't set out to be the sort of person who's a picture on a bedroom wall. So it's been a strange thing to have to get used to. (Steeples, 1989, September 25, p.12)

Schofield was fanciable for many older people too. He was voted "Britain's Sexiest Man" by readers of *CHAT* in 1987, and the magazine proclaimed that, "Our nationwide search reveals Philip Schofield turns mums on to more than just kids' TV!" (Brenard, 1987, August?). In a *Daily Mirror* poll, he was voted second sexiest man in Britain ("Schofield's style," 1988, January 7). The following year *The Sun* announced that Schofield was the man its readers would most like to marry (Millar, 1989, May 18). Asked about this in an interview in *TV Guide* magazine the next month, Schofield modestly described himself as "more a heart murmur than a throb" - a line picked out to headline the feature (Fisher, 1989, June). As demonstrated here, Schofield dealt with his "sex symbol" status by modestly playing it down, stressing he was nothing special. On ITV's *This Morning*, host Richard Madeley (1992, November 24) asked Schofield when had it dawned on him that he was a sex symbol:

> Schofield: It's bizarre really because it's not something that I ever really completely understood or think probably still understand. There's no doubt about it that, that ninety-eight per cent of the people who are seen as some sort of um sex symbol wouldn't be given a second glance walking down the street if they weren't on the telly or in the movies, or doing whatever it is that they're actually doing. And it is, it is this strange, em, [struggles to find the right word]
>
> Madeley: It's not glamour is it?
>
> Schofield: Well no, it's something that telly gives you. I don't know what it is but it's that, it's that personal thing of having you, you're in someone's living

> room, they get to know you. But if I was walking down the street here today . . . and I wasn't doing what I'm doing, if I if I, you know, just had a straight forward, you know, sort of nine to five proper job then no-one would give me a second glance. And you've got to keep that at the back of your mind, you mustn't imagine that you're something that you're not really because if it all came to an end that would finish very quickly.

Unlike a pop star or a film star, sex and glamour did not fit comfortably with Schofield's persona as a presenter. Only occasionally was his photograph in a pin-up poster shot to be "sexy" (e.g., Fisher, 1988, January 6): usually his poses were direct and unthreatening, his look cheerful and friendly. Schofield's talent was being ordinary. He dispelled notions that he might be extraordinary or special, sexy or glamorous, by reasserting how ordinary in fact he was.

Schofield does "being ordinary"

It should be noted that there is perhaps a fine line between being ordinary and being considered dull. For instance, Schofield's *Spitting Image* puppet appeared on the show in a song sketch about being bland (in August 1990?). Again of course this tension is not exclusive to Schofield but is associated with the nice, boy/girl-next-door personality presenter.[18] In the type of mainstream programming he was part of, to be "ordinary" is important - as hopefully was made clear in Chapter One of this thesis.

In an article in *The Mail on Sunday*, Sinclair McKay (1992, January 12) describes Schofield as the perfect product of the looking glass television culture where reality is what you see on the screen. Schofield, whom he calls a kiddies' institution, is, he says, "A supreme example of the democracy of the medium; the elevation and exaggeration of the ordinary," and he goes on to say that the fact that there are a hundred Schofields

wandering round Ealing Broadway shopping centre on a Saturday afternoon is the key to his "admittedly prodigious talent". Anna Home is quoted as saying, "It's an art to be that ordinary" (ibid.).

Therefore it is very interesting to consider the way in which Schofield's move into, and subsequent success in, the theatre was dealt with. By playing the lead role in a top West End musical, Schofield was entering the realm of "showbusiness stardom": he was becoming "extraordinary". He dealt with this by presenting himself as an ordinary guy for whom all of this was an unexpected, exciting adventure into an area in which he did not belong. One of the ways in which Schofield "normalised" himself (i.e., kept himself down-to-earth) was by emphasising his complete lack of musical expertise. For example, when he was a guest on the BBC1 chat show, Terry Wogan (1992, March 13) asked, "Do you have a wide range? Can you do a high C?" Schofield replied, "I haven't got a clue. I don't know. I'm not a musical person," and stressed that he was "just" a television presenter. Similarly, during an interview on ITV's *Des O'Connor Tonight*, Schofield said the following:

> When I went to that audition, the guy said on the piano, I was about to sing in front of Andrew Lloyd Webber. And I mean the first time you've ever sung in your whole life other than the shower or the car, is in front of Andrew Lloyd Webber who's in a blackened theatre, sitting there, and I thought, "This is ridiculous. What the hell am I doing here?" And the guy said, before they all arrived, he said em, "What do you like to warm up to, on the piano?" So I [said], "I don't understand what you mean. How do you mean?" I thought, "It's like Jane Fonda. Warm up to what?" He said, "Scales and things." I said, "I'm sorry I don't know what a scale is." And he must have thought, "What are they doing?" (O'Connor, 1994, January 5)

Schofield was continually modest about his career and his fame, denied any sense of talent (which would suggest a skill other than simply being yourself), and reflected on

any success in much the same way: by emphasising that really he is "just like us". He defines himself as an ordinary member of the public, as opposed to a showbiz celebrity type. Interviewing Schofield, Wark notes how he "continues to insist that he is really very ordinary" (1989, November 7, p.21) and later quotes him as saying, "I would much rather go to the local pub than go to a fashionable club. You see I'm very much like everyone else" (ibid.). In one of his standard replies Schofield goes so far as to describe himself as *less* of a star than other members of the public:

> I don't think I have any special sort of gift, but I've been in the right place at the right time. And I never think of myself as a star. After all, I don't save anyone's life. I don't stack aeroplanes and get them safely into Heathrow. I don't mend people's plumbing when their house is flooded. I have a very unimportant job in the overall scheme of things, and you can't ever forget that. ("Superstars of TV," 1993, August 28, p.9)

Post *Going Live*: the loss of youthfulness

This section considers the shift in Schofield's persona that was necessitated following his departure from Saturday morning television and his resulting loss of youthfulness. Schofield had himself said:

> In fact, to be honest, what worried me when I celebrated my 29th birthday recently was the thought that I'm getting older, and that one day there'll come a time when I won't be doing the *Going Live* work... that there'll come a day when magazines like *Just Seventeen* will think I'm too old to bother talking to! (Boland, 1991, April)

This day came in 1993 when Schofield was aged 31. Although he had already been presenting series aimed at an older audience for the BBC - *Schofield's Europe* (1990 and 1991) and *Television's Greatest Hits* (1992) - for as long as he was on *Going Live*

Schofield had a visible place in children's and teenagers' popular culture. Although Andi Peters had taken over *The Smash Hits Poll Winners' Party*, Schofield could, for instance, appear with other children's presenters on the front cover of a *Radio Times* declaring, "School's out! 101 things to do this Easter" (1993, March 27–April 2). However *Going Live* finished soon after (17 April 1993) and he moved to a different genre of programming at ITV where his main audience was not predominantly the young.

In the months that followed his leaving the BBC, Schofield allowed his hair to go grey: this was headline news and definitively marked his move into a new era of his broadcasting career. (He also began wearing glasses in public: something he had been reluctant to do during his days as a pin-up.) No longer could he be described as youthful, the characteristic that had been so central to his successful boy-next-door persona, because suddenly Schofield seemed almost middle-aged. There was much media interest in his new look, and speculation about his reinventing himself went on for over a year.[19] *The Sunday Times*, for instance, wrote, "Phillip Schofield, fresh out of Lloyd Webber and into tortoiseshell specs that spell: 'I am no longer a children's presenter'" ("Critics' choice," 1994, February 27). The *Daily Express* described Schofield's move from the BBC to ITV as easy: "he let his dyed-brown hair go grey, donned professional specs and announced he had become a family man" (Graham, 1994, October 14, p.60). The transition was more problematic than that however. In *The Observer*, Andy Medhurst (1994, December 11) stated that:

> Few television personalities have set out so doggedly to reinvent themselves as Philip Schofield. Once the golden boy of Children's BBC, smooth-cheeked, unflappable and happy to talk to puppets, he has recently embarked on a crash course in maturity, moving to an ITV eager for proven star names and

> consequently keen to shower him with vehicles. He now wears glasses and ties, sheathes those glinting teeth, and flaunts his prematurely greying hair. If he marched on set carrying an encyclopaedia under each arm, the message couldn't be more blatant: 'I'm serious now, me.' It's all rather reminiscent of that moment in the late Sixties when various successfully frothy pop groups announced they were 'going progressive', and just about as convincing.

At the time Schofield denied his grey hair was a deliberate attempt to ease his move out of children's television. As with his "Mr Clean" image, he attributed responsibility to the press. He has said:

> It makes a nice story that I was just a kids' presenter, then I went to ITV and overnight became a 31-year-old man. It wasn't quite like that. . . . I had already begun to move in that direction. But when the stories came out saying: "Phillip Schofield grows up and goes to ITV", I thought, oh well, I can take advantage of this and save myself a fortune on hair dye! (Furness, 1994, March 5-11, p.11)

The next year he said the following:

> I could not believe the huge reaction I got for being grey. It was like I was a different person, and I was immediately dropped from the covers of teenage magazines such as Just 17 and Smash Hits. But I wasn't worried at the time because I felt a more mature look was what was needed if I was to straddle the divide between children's television and my new job presenting family entertainment shows. (Middlehurst, 1995, October 14)

So there is clearly consistency between Schofield's market position and the subsidiary circulation he gets. The programmes he has presented for ITV have been within the genre of family light-entertainment, and therefore, while no longer welcome in some magazines, he continues to (as he always did) be included in magazines for older women, in newspapers and their supplements, in television listings magazines, on daytime television programmes, and so on. Appearing on the front cover, he has

featured in celebrity interviews in magazines published for food stores: Iceland Frozen Foods' *The Mag!* ("Schofield's test," 1996, February) and *Alldays* ("Schofield's best," 1998, summer).

Schofield's more mature image also tied in with developments in his personal life. 1993 was not only a significant year for him professionally with his move to ITV, but privately too because he married and became a father. From then on, his role as a "family man" has dominated his persona. Schofield had always presented himself as family oriented and had spoken of his desire to marry and have children, so this was not a "reinvention" of his persona, but it did replace the dominating "Mr Clean" of his bachelorhood nonetheless.

On the whole, Schofield had previously been open about every aspect of his personal life, with the exception of his current love-life. He was never forthcoming about present girlfriends. By the summer of 1993 however, married and with his days as a heart-throb disappearing behind him, he was less guarded. When Schofield's first daughter was born in July 1993 she was "presented" in a *Hello!* magazine exclusive: this included a front cover and nine page article containing pictures of the family at home (Hart, 1993, July 31). In this feature Schofield and his wife talk in detail about each other, their relationship, and their daughter Molly's birth. They also showed their wedding photographs publicly for the first time. Since then Schofield has willingly talked about his family life. Of course, these discourses of family life tie in with mainstream discourses of ordinariness. For instance, when Schofield was a guest with Judy Finnigan and Richard Madeley on ITV's *This Morning*, the following was said:

Finnigan: Listen. Congratulations on the baby.
Schofield: Thank you.
Finnigan: You must be thrilled to bits.
Schofield: I am. I am. I've got something down here which I wasn't going to tell you anything about it unless you brought it up, but seeing as you have brought it up, would you like to see a picture?
Both: Oh yes!
Finnigan: This is the new dad. The proud new dad.
Schofield: There you go, this is her. This is Molly.
[camera gets a close-up] . . .
Finnigan: Ahhh!
Schofield: That's Molly.
Finnigan: She's gorgeous. How old is she now?
Schofield: She's five months old.
Madeley: What's she laughing at?
Schofield: She laughs all the time. She laughs non-stop. These are my dad's pictures, he's very proud of them. . . .
Madeley: Who do you think she favours, as they say?
Schofield: Well I don't know, I think she's her own person really. . . .
Finnigan: You can't really tell until they get hair. I mean when they get hair they change completely. . . . So what's going to happen over Christmas? Because if you're up in Blackpool playing *Joseph*, what happens to Steph and Molly?
Schofield: Well they're up with me at the moment. And then for Christmas they'll go back down again and sort of get everything ready for Christmas, which is not a task I [envy]
Madeley: [interrupting] But you'll be home for Christmas day won't you?
Schofield: And then I'm going to get home. . . .
Finnigan: Well you'll love Christmas now you've got a baby. Just don't do what we did last year though and stay up on Christmas Eve until half past five in the morning. . . .

(Finnigan & Madeley, 1993, December 16)

Schofield's first programme for ITV was a special documentary called *Six Little Angels* about the Walton sextuplets (broadcast on Christmas Day 1993). Inevitably publicity for the programme focused on Schofield the family man. For example, *South London Press*'s TV Guide headlined their feature "Molly makes a new man of Phillip" (1993, December 24–January 6) and wrote about "new dad" Schofield. Elsewhere, the sextuplets' mother is quoted as saying, "When the girls heard Phillip Schofield was going to be making the Christmas special with them, they were delighted. He's

marvellous fun. And they were desperate to ask: 'How's *your* baby girl?'" (Patience, 1993, Christmas edition).

Coverage of Schofield's career has continued to concentrate as much on his private life as his professional work. For example, "A happy Schofield shares his views on fame and fatherhood" headlined an article in the *Sunday Life*, which went on to describe Schofield as "the family man" and claimed that, "Changing nappies and midnight feeds are part of Phillip Schofield's hectic schedule" (Bell, 1994, March 13, p.25). At the press launch of the programme *Schofield's Quest*, when asked what his own personal quest was, Schofield replied that it was to end up with a well-balanced family. This point about family was the one picked up in publicity, as demonstrated by the following examples of headlines: "Schofield's quest to be the daddy of them all: TV takes a back-seat as Phillip finds the joys of family life are priceless" (Graham, 1994, October 14, p.60); "Phillip's proud to be a family man" (1994, October 16); "Schofield's new quest...to be a perfect father" (Moore, 1994, October).

Conclusion

"The Schofield Phenomenon" that began in the mid-1980s corresponded with the growth of a market. Commercial discourse was featuring in children's television to an ever-greater extent. Programmes were increasingly about the consumption of the media and a celebration of popular culture. This cultural world was shared by magazines for young people. Thus, dependent on an intertextual environment, this market facilitated fandom. Schofield's role in this sphere of popular culture was unique, but it set a

precedent. He had fans and he was a pin-up: this is now the norm for attractive young television stars.[20]

Schofield was a part of this commercial market for young people, but of course principally he was a presenter and he belonged to broadcasting's personality system where the aim is to relate to audiences. This case study has shown Schofield to be a suitable choice through which to demonstrate the key characteristics of broadcasting's personality system being put into practice. Boyish and youthful, Schofield related to his viewers by adopting the role of the older brother or friend. It seems he managed to achieve this without either patronising younger or alienating older members of the audience. No longer a children's presenter, his more recent programmes on ITV are mainstream light-entertainment, aimed at a broad and general market.

The programmes that Schofield has presented throughout his career have provided the opportunity for him to address audiences directly and personally in the ordinary voice of everyday life. Particularly in the case of the live and unscripted programmes he presented for the BBC, his style of presentation was informal, spontaneous, and relaxed. On both television and radio, he had lots of space to engage in conversation and chat, and, in doing so, to reveal his own personality. Schofield's appearances were regular and frequent and thus he became familiar and knowable. He has always been made accessible through interviews and features in subsidiary forms of circulation, where the focus is often on his personal life.

The impression is given in his media appearances that Schofield is simply being himself. When audiences are encouraged to assume this, a belief in his being genuine

and sincere is vital to their accepting it. The evidence presented by journalists largely suggests he is authentic. Crucially, he is presented as being ordinary and down-to-earth. Schofield deals with the extraordinary elements of his life - such as his fame, success, or sex symbol status - through modesty. He maintains his down-to-earth persona by stressing how ordinary he really is, emphasising he is just like everyone else. He normalises himself by concentrating on the family and the mundane: although his representativeness decreases as he becomes increasingly wealthy and successful, his day-to-day life as a dad (changing nappies and reading bedtime stories) remains familiar, and it is this he focuses on. Schofield insists he set out to be a broadcaster, that he was not aiming to be a pin-up or a celebrity.

Schofield claims his persona was constructed for him by the press and is outside his control. This persona has always been "Mr Nice Guy" which clearly relates to the genre of family entertainment he has worked within. Established when he was a children's presenter, his ordinariness was equated with being clean. This clean label has at times been a source of irritation and he has sought to counter it, but these tarnishing attempts have been unsuccessful. His safe persona has served him well in children's and family programming however. Although somewhat exaggerated as "Mr Clean", the image of Schofield presented in the press and magazines is consistent with his broadcasting persona. When a young man in his twenties, he was described as the boy-next-door, and based both on his professional media appearances and his uncontroversial private life, this was a fair description. Now in his thirties, the emphasis is on Schofield the family man, something he has, as demonstrated, positively encouraged. Schofield's persona has shifted as he has matured, however his personality has been uniform. Throughout

his career, there has been no sign of any discrepancy between his professional and his private life and he has never suffered any scandals.

In conclusion, the novelty and significance of Schofield's place within young people's popular culture should be stressed. However it is also clear from the summary above that, as part of broadcasting's personality system, he possesses the qualities of the pure personality (discussed in Chapter One) and has been shown to be typical of this category of presenter. More specifically, he is clearly representative of the persona type - discussed in Chapter Two in relation to his management company - labelled the boy-next-door and known for being nice.

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[1]This basic, factual information is repeatedly recounted by Schofield and by journalists in interviews and features. Overviewing the archive, it soon becomes clear that the same themes are returned to and stories retold. Writing about the personae of American talk show hosts, Shattuc (1997) notes the "recycling of a limited set of calculated disclosures" (p.58).

[2]David Oswell (1995) writes that in the early days of television, whilst thought that ideally the child would be watching with mother, it was recognised that this might not always be the case. In order to make the medium "safe" for the pre-school viewer, the BBC placed a "mother" within the text itself: as with Annette Mills in *Muffin the Mule* (p.38).

[3]Briggs (1981) refers to Auntie Cyclone (Kathleen Garscadden), Uncle Caractacus (Captain C.A. Lewis), and Uncle Mac (Derek McCulloch) amongst others. In his book *Goodnight Children ... Everywhere*, Ian Hartley (1983) writes at length about a number of the early household names from children's broadcasting.

[4]Noble's research also involved asking 42 television producers to predict children's likely responses to *Blue Peter*. He concludes that, "Producers correctly perceived the roles that the personas presented to the children - those of elder brother, aunty and father" (p.201). They also accurately estimated the popularity of the presenters, predicting that John Noakes would be a clear favourite (p.196).

[5]This may be regarded as a positive development, as opposed to the stance of journalist Georgia Campbell. In a piece for *The Guardian* entitled "Watch with Horror", she asks what on earth has happened to children's television presenters, and nostalgic for the past

she says, "All these presenters from the golden age of children's television had one thing in common: they all looked and behaved like adults should" (1991, February 18).

[6]As a teenager, Schofield greatly admired Noel Edmonds, the Radio 1 DJ and presenter of the BBC's *Multi-Coloured Swap Shop*. In an article in *The Mail on Sunday*, television executive Peter Gratton says of Schofield:

> He's very much a kid of the media generation. He was inspired in his early teens by all the DJs around then. They were becoming stars in their own right. We baby boomers all wanted to be pop stars. But now kids want to be TV presenters. (McKay, 1992, January 12)

Schofield must surely have been one of the first to have a broadcaster for a role model and to have had ambitions to pursue such a career himself. Subsequently, as a presenter, he himself then became a role model for many young people. In their Hall of Fame section, *The Mail on Sunday Review* magazine featured a gang of fifteen children's television presenters. Of the seven aged 25 or under, five gave Phillip Schofield as their childhood hero on TV (McEwen, 1997, June 29).

[7]Young viewers voted Schofield "Top Man on TV" in the *SOS Awards* (presented by the BBC in association with the Stars Organisation for Spastics) in 1987, 1988, and 1989. He won the *Radio Times and Open Air Award* for "Favourite Children's Personality of 1989" and was also voted "Fave Male on Telly" in the 1989 *Fast Forward Awards*. In both 1989 and 1990 he was named "Top Children's Presenter" in *The TV Times Awards*.

[8]Marshall (1990) claims that children are important as both viewers and consumers. As viewers they are significant in influencing a television company's overall ratings figures: he argues that, "Children are extremely important in determining which programme and therefore which channel is viewed, not just during traditional child time but also late into peak viewing" (p.102). Marshall also demonstrates that children and teenagers need to be recognised as serious consumers: as long ago as 1987 it was estimated that 12-19 year-olds had the considerable spending power of approximately £14,000 million per annum (p.103).

[9]Buckingham (1997) claims that academic responses to the commercialization of children's culture reflect what he refers to as the polarization within media and cultural studies between populism and pessimism. He says:

> Thus, on the one hand, we find the cultural pessimism of writers like Stephen Kline (1993), who attack the 'commercialization' of children's culture. . . . On the other hand, we have the more optimistic approach of writers like Ellen Seiter (1993), who . . . emphasizes the active role of audiences, and the potentially 'empowering' dimensions of commercially produced popular culture, particularly for young girls. (pp.287-288)

Given that we live in a consumer society and that young people have a considerable amount of money to spend, it may seem inevitable that children's popular culture is commercialised. However this does not alter the fact that children's broadcasting has much to offer its young audience. Indeed merchandising and consumerism can be

thought of as extending the experiences on offer. The overall output of children's television informs, educates, and entertains through a wide variety of programming and it is surely likely that it will continue to do so.

[10]The source of the information in this paragraph is a BBC television programme entitled *Multi-coloured Saturdays* (Bowden, 1996, August 26). Presented by Noel Edmonds, the programme is a nostalgic celebration marking twenty years of children's Saturday morning television.

[11]Saturday morning programmes are engaged in one of the most direct ratings battles in British television. *Going Live* consistently pulled in more viewers than its ITV counterpart, *Motormouth*. *Motormouth*'s producer Nigel Pickard recognised that the BBC had an asset in its presenters and is quoted in *The Guardian* as saying:

> *Going Live* has one of the most identifiable presenters for both children and parents in Phillip Schofield. He is excellent at his job and must be worth an eight or ten per cent share of the audience before you start. (Laurence, 1990, December 23)

[12]*Radio Times* columnist Sue Arnold declared of *Going Live* that, "this potpourri of jokes, interviews, social issues, current affairs and quizzes is just the sort of thing that best fills the 'inform, educate, entertain' dictum broadcasting aims for" (1992, September 26-October 2, p.30). Also writing in the *Radio Times*, journalist Penny Vincenzi (1993, April 17-23) praised *Going Live*'s variety of content, and claimed that its producer rejected the occasional criticism that the show encouraged consumerism.

[13]It would be interesting to investigate the arrangements behind Schofield's appearances in subsidiary forms of circulation. Obviously his employers and his management company are responsible for ensuring his shows and his career are publicised. To this end they initiate coverage by sending out press releases and organising press conferences. On other occasions, the approach comes from publications: with a feature in mind, an interview and/or photo session is requested.

[14]This was at a time when young people were becoming keenly interested in the workings of the media: a fact that is reflected in the growth of media studies. Applications to such courses increased dramatically around this time: in the decade from 1986 to 1996 there was a 1538 per cent increase in entries to media studies and this astounding rise really took off in 1990 (Hodges, 1996, October 31). It could be argued that this trend for looking behind the scenes in magazines (and on other television programmes), and the visibility of the production team and studio in the programmes themselves (as discussed above), contributed towards feeding this enthusiasm in the media.

[15]While the same could be said to apply to pop stars, film stars, actors etc., the difference is that in Schofield's case, as a media personality, the *primary* discourses were about him as a person rather than his work.

[16]It must be noted that, although this study looks at their manifestation in his specific case, these tensions are not exclusive to Schofield. For instance, the nice/sexy tension

has also afflicted Anthea Turner - as was alluded to earlier in this thesis - and indeed the late Jill Dando too. Dando was one of those presenters described as "the girl-next-door" and known for "being nice". Infamously, on the week of her death she appeared on the front cover of the *Radio Times* in a "sexy" pose. This "racy" image did not sit easily with her persona. Thus it seems that this nice/sexy tension is a product of a certain genre of personality presentation: that associated with the presenter type described as "pure personality" in Chapter One of this thesis.

[17]Parallels have been drawn between Schofield and Cliff Richard. Schofield has, for instance, been described as being like "a latter-day Cliff Richard" (Steeples, 1989, September 25, p.12). As would be expected from the discussion in the previous section, this is not a comparison he welcomes.

[18]Aware of such accusations, the late Jill Dando once called herself "Jill Blando" (Burchill, 1999, April 28).

[19]Schofield started to dye his hair and to wear contact lenses again in September 1995.

[20]Something similar has happened with footballers.

PART TWO

CHAPTER FOUR

PARA-SOCIAL INTERACTION

Introduction

At this point in the thesis the existing literature from a number of perspectives on what might be called "the consumption of the broadcasting personality" will be reviewed. This chapter begins with an article by Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl that first appeared over forty years ago. It has been much referenced since then and the extremely valuable insights it contains continue to remain applicable in contemporary media and culture four decades later. Published in the journal *Psychiatry* in 1956 and entitled "Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance", its authors introduce the concepts of the "para-social relationship" and "para-social interaction". As this chapter will show, much of the subsequent work is based on their theory.

The Para-Social Relationship

Horton and Wohl (1956) begin by asserting their main argument that the (then) new mass media give audiences the illusion of face-to-face relationships with those who appear. A *para-social relationship* is the name they give this seeming face-to-face relationship (p.215). It is a social relationship because, they claim, people respond to media performers in a similar way they do to those in their primary group, their circle of peers.

Horton and Wohl explain that television, in particular, is presented in such a way that social interaction is cued. Of course, as they note, the communication is in fact one-sided, nondialectical, under the control of the performer, and lacks the opportunity for

mutual development (ibid.); yet despite this the audience is invited to consider itself involved in a face-to-face exchange and to respond appropriately. This occurs because viewers are faced and addressed directly in the style of a personal and private conversation by presenters who, in so doing, engage them in apparent interpersonal interaction. As Horton and Wohl point out, an audience does more than simply passively observe, it participates in the programme. Whereas fiction demands the viewer participates through identification, direct address encourages the viewers to enter into the performance by making the anticipated social response: the audience takes a reciprocal part in the performance. The term introduced to describe this "simulacrum of conversational give and take" is *para-social interaction* (ibid.). Horton and Wohl later talk about a "social transaction" between a presenter and his (sic) audience (p.228).

Before continuing with Horton and Wohl's argument, this point about direct address and social reciprocation will be elaborated: since direct address seems central to para-social interaction, it is considered worthy of further consideration. Tolson (1996) writes that all texts invite the reader/viewer to participate by addressing them but he draws attention to the fact that the context within which the communication takes place will influence the approach adopted (p.53). Tolson claims that broadcasting, which he defines to include both radio and television as they are alike in their modes of address, "has developed direct address as its pivotal form" (p.58). This is quite distinct from the cinematic mode of address and is a crucial reason why cinema offers a very different kind of experience from that of broadcasting. Similarly Ellis (1992) points out that forms of direct address are extremely rare in cinema (p.60). In cinema, he says, the spectator is given a position of spectatorship, of voyeurism, and remains separate from the illusion (pp.81-82). However he states that, unlike cinema, broadcast TV's regime is

one of co-presence (p.138), and that it is direct address which radically reduces any separation between viewer and image (p.143). He explains that direct address's most obvious form is that of an individual speaking directly, as though holding a conversation, saying "I" and "you" (p.134).

Margaret Morse (1985) explains that the cinema presents itself as story, whereas television is a strongly discursive medium. She distinguishes as follows:

> *Story* and *discourse*, then, are two planes of language, the former suppressing subjectivity in order to refer to an objective and separate realm of space and time inhabited by others (he, she and it), the latter a plane of subjectivity in which a person, 'I', adopts responsibility for an utterance and calls for intersubjective relations with a 'you' in the here and now. (pp.2-3)

Discussing differences in the construction of discourse and story space, she elaborates that in contrast to cinema, which denies the looks associated with dialogue, television always includes its audience in the implied discourse space (p.5). She continues that the "talking head" position of hosts and presenters "is probably most responsible for 'the impression of discourse' in the viewer" (p.6). Furthermore, although we know that television offers us an impression of discourse, this is nonetheless experienced as if "real" (p.14). Morse says that, "Perhaps because TV talk is fashioned from the stuff of everyday life, television itself seems more 'real' and everyday than other media" (p.2).

Of course, as discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, a key feature of television and radio is that they are received in the informality of the private sphere and, like Scannell (1989), Tolson stresses that since the 1930s broadcasters have experimented with different ways of communicating with the domestic audience. He argues that

broadcasters have discovered that direct address to the audience is the most effective way of securing its involvement and he gives Bruce Forsyth's 'Nice to see you' and David Frost's 'Hello, good evening and welcome' as examples (1996, p.59).[1]

Scannell (1996) again points out that the technique of addressing the audience directly is one that had to be worked at, as demonstrated by early television's news presentation. At first the BBC considered it inappropriate for the news to be read by an in-vision presenter, believing this "would personalize a discourse that was supposed to be impersonal, impartial and objective" (p.14). Instead an anonymous male voice read the news with only illustrative charts, photographs, and captions appearing visually. However, as Scannell explains, such an approach did not make for "good television" and before long the newsreader appeared in vision; but, forced to constantly divert their eyes from the camera to their script, news presentation remained problematic and it was not until the invention of the auto-cue that the situation was resolved. Use of the auto-cue ensured the effect of a direct look from the newsreader. Crucially this is a direct look in which the viewer is implicated - what Scannell terms a "real-world interactive occasion between the institutions of broadcasting and each and every viewer, thereby securing the effect, for each and every one of them, of 'I am being told'" (ibid.).

It is interesting to note that for a relatively short period recently Channel 4 chose to have their continuity announcers appear in-vision; however they did not use direct address. In this most unusual situation, they did not look into the camera which was used instead to show them reading their announcement into the microphone. As the viewer was not implicated, one had the impression of "overseeing" as opposed to being directly spoken

to and thus involved. Of course, crucially this technique also means that the announcers will not become personalities.

In his discussion of television's personality system, Langer (1981) highlights the fact that television utilizes direct address. The medium has he says, "conventionalized and universalized the form of direct address where the viewer is spoken to and looked at directly, engaged in what is potentially an intimate, interactive scene" (p.362). He elaborates that in their use of direct address - which includes direct gaze or eye contact - television personalities appear to be positioning viewers as the constant focus of attention: they are actively taking their viewers "into account", even summoning them. The viewer is thus positioned to engage with the personality and to respond to them with the equivalent directness and intimacy. Even the close physical proximity of the viewer to the television set appears to reduce the distance between broadcasting and its viewers.

Goffman (1981, p.235) also talks about direct address, although he does not label it as such but refers instead to "direct annnouncing". He describes this mode of announcing as one in which a simulation of two-person conversation is attempted. Here the announcer must talk *as if* responsive others were co-present, and thus, Goffman says, announcing is "response constructive" (p.241). "Talking back to television" is not an uncommon reaction to direct address, according to Wilson (1993, p.149). Morse (1985, p.13) also argues that television invites talk-back responses, whether actually verbalised or left unheard, through its use of discursive forms and especially direct address.

Tolson (1996) explains that a major consequence of the use of direct address in broadcasting is that it develops para-social interaction between the institution and its audience. Modes of address engage the audience and invite them to participate in a certain type of activity. Direct address, as used in broadcasting, simulates a form of direct interpersonal communication and thus the individual viewer or listener addressed is encouraged to respond and interact in a social way.[2] Furthermore, Tolson says that because direct address appears to be live - whether it really is or is not - broadcasting constructs a situation of temporal "co-presence" between the institution and its audience. Ellis (1992, p.58) also notes the importance of stressing that television "appears to be" live because the fact that much of its content is actually recorded is often disguised under its apparent immediacy.[3]

Tolson uses the example of radio DJs, whose activities encourage para-social interaction (and whose programmes are predominantly live), as illustration and he mentions the work of Montgomery (1986) and Brand and Scannell (1991). Martin Montgomery (1986) concentrates on DJ talk. He outlines some characteristics of this discourse and illustrates these with examples from BBC Radio 1. Although DJ talk is monologue, it attempts to simulate co-present conversation with its audience. Montgomery claims that the dimension most foregrounded in DJ talk is the interpersonal and that this is done in a variety of ways.

Crucially, the audience is addressed directly by use of the second person pronoun, "you". While frequently making direct reference to the audience, the DJ may even comment on himself and his relationship with them (p.425). And so the discourse tends to operate between the first and second person: that is, between "I" (the DJ) and "you"

(the audience). The audience may be referred to as a whole, or may be identified specifically by name or by other identifiers including region, occupation, event, age, and characteristics such as star sign, and so on (p.426).

Montgomery goes on to explain that the social or personal effect of direct address may be made more so by combining it with greeting tokens like "Hi" and "Hello" (p.427). Here the listeners are continually being addressed as if they are capable of responding - the DJ is treating absent recipients as if they were co-present. Montgomery says that, "the combination of identifiers with greetings and with direct address would seem to be part of the way in which a relatively dynamic relationship is achieved between the discourse and its broadcast audience" (p.428). A DJ will also commonly make reference to conditions of spatial co-presence - something Montgomery says might be considered an extension of direct address - by assuming a common visual field for himself and his audience. And so he will refer to his immediate environment as if it were visible to those listening; thus implying a form of co-presence. This technique serves to diminish the sense of distance between the DJ and his audience.

Another way in which a DJ can draw an audience into the discourse is through the use of 'response-demanding' utterances; and so it is usual for DJ discourse to contain questions or commands (p.429). Montgomery also describes how use is made of the speech acts he refers to as 'expressives'. These express the feelings or attitudes of the speaker. Often DJs will be talking unscripted, or from their own script, but on occasions they may simply be reading scripted material. Nevertheless, in cases when DJ talk is scripted, there will be instances of spontaneous insertion: for example, "oh dear" or "please, please" (p.433). These take the form of personal asides in which the DJ is

responding to or commenting on what he has to say. Montgomery claims that these interpolations - the switches between the scripted and the extempore - register the shifting stance of the DJ to the talk (p.438). It can be argued that it is in these interjections that the DJ, speaking for himself, is revealing "himself" as a personality to his audience. Writing about ad hoc elaboration by announcers, Goffman (1981) makes the point that extraneous, unscripted, "personal" ad-libbing is tied to the development of on-air personality (p.280). Indeed he suggests that popular DJs probably could not become popular without doing so.

So, to summarise Montgomery's argument, in the use of direct modes of address, (including identifiers and greetings), response-demanding utterances and expressives, and in the simulation of co-presence, DJ talk foregrounds the interpersonal and implicates the audience into the discourse. Montgomery says that, "To treat the audience as if they were in visual contact with the speaker, available for greeting, and capable of responding to the discourse is to construct a sense of reciprocity even in its absence" (pp.429-430). An audience is not simply "out there" listening and overhearing, but rather through the DJ's attempts to simulate co-present conversation, they are continually encouraged to respond and participate socially. Baker (1995) advises "would-be" radio presenters on how best to use their links to reinforce the bond between themselves and their listeners: for example, he says that "the gag link", "the observation link", and "the anecdote link" all provide the opportunity to relate to the audience (pp.52-53).

When Phillip Schofield was a DJ on Radio 1, he conformed to the standard discursive regimes outlined above. He typically welcomed listeners to his show with, "Hiya. How

are you? I hope you're fit and well." Opening with a casual greeting (hiya), he addressed the audience directly (you), as if they were capable of answering (How are you?). Schofield's shows were unscripted and he usually spoke for himself. However when he had to read weather or travel reports, he would ad-lib to convey his own thoughts (e.g., "It's a cold day today, I'm afraid."). He used his links to chat about himself and how he was feeling: what he had been up to during the week, his plans for the evening, and so on. He would offer his views on a film he had seen, a book he had read, or a new album he had listened to; or he would comment on a story in the news. The intensely personal nature of this style of radio presentation provided the potential for a social bond to be formed (and maintained) between Schofield and his listeners.

The phenomenon whereby discourse draws on social skills as a means of achieving a goal has been discussed critically by Norman Fairclough (1994), who talks about the concept of "synthetic personalization" in direct address. This is the term he uses to describe "the manipulation of 'interpersonal' meanings and forms for strategic and instrumental purposes" (p.257). He goes on to point out the "simulation of a personal relationship" between spoken or written texts and their audiences (p.260). He regards this as a key feature of the pervasive trend in contemporary culture he refers to as the "conversationalization of public discourse", whereby many areas of the media model their output on the language of conversation and in so doing appropriate the discursive practices of private, everyday, ordinary life. Such discourse is "synthetic" because, though modelled on the genuine, it is artifically produced and insincere in nature. Fairclough (1989, p.218) distinguishes between "real" intimacy and friendship and their synthetic forms (which arise from the strategic manipulation of subject positions and

relationships towards the interpersonal). Clearly this ties in with the critical discussion of performed sincerity in Chapter One.

Now that this thesis has established the importance of direct address and the simulation of interpersonal forms of talk in encouraging social reciprocation from audiences, it will return to Horton and Wohl's argument. Having introduced the concepts of para-social interaction and relationships, Horton and Wohl (1956) do develop their theory of intimacy at a distance further. They say that the ability to confront the audience with an apparently intimate and face-to-face association with a media performer is most directly displayed in what they call the "personality program" (p.228). Surprisingly, as shall be shown, subsequent studies rather neglect this element of the debate, adopting the phenomenon of para-social interaction in a general sense. However of particular interest to Horton and Wohl is the (then) new type of performer who features in such shows: the category of the "personality". They suggest that the personality's main attribute seems to be his (sic) ability to cultivate and maintain the suggested intimacy: that is, to sustain the para-social interaction (ibid.). Horton and Wohl go so far as to claim that the existence of these personalities is a function of the media themselves; that they exist for their audience only in the para-social relation. They call such performers *personae* (p.216), and discuss their role as familiar and intimate figures who achieve a pervasiveness and closeness with their audience. Horton and Wohl say that:

> The spectacular fact about such personae is that they can claim and achieve an intimacy with what are literally crowds of strangers, and this intimacy . . . is extremely influential with, and satisfying for, the great numbers who willingly receive it and share in it. (ibid.)

Horton and Wohl reiterate that personality presenters are responsible for initiating and plausibly imitating intimacy; that they work to create an illusion of intimacy. Horton and Wohl call it an illusion because the persona/audience relationship is inevitably one-sided, and reciprocity between the two can only be suggested. They outline several principal strategies for achieving the illusion of intimacy (p.217). "Most characteristic", they say, "is the attempt of the persona to duplicate the gestures, conversational style, and milieu of an informal face-to-face gathering" (ibid.). They stress that, on the whole, television is casual, and that the values stressed in "personality shows" - sociability, easy affability, friendship, and close contact - are those associated with social interaction in primary relations (p.218).[4] They add that:

> The "personality" program - in contrast to the drama - is especially designed to provide occasion for good-natured joking and teasing, praising and admiring, gossiping and telling anecdotes, in which the values of friendship and intimacy are stressed. (p.223)

Having stressed that the persona (and the production team) maintain the para-social relationship by guiding and controlling the para-social interaction, it is recognised that their attributing responsibility to the viewer to adopt a complementary role is crucial here. According to Horton and Wohl, "This imputed complementary role is social in character, and is some variant of the role or roles normally played in the spectator's primary social groups" (p.228). Thus the audience is seen as occupying an independent and self-conscious "answering role" (p.219); and the appropriate answering role is specified by implication and suggestion, founded in common cultural conventions (derived from the primary relations of friendship and the family), and assigned to complement and give closure to the role of the persona. Of course some (including occasional or one-time) viewers may refuse to accept this role offered to/demanded of

them by the programme. However there are cues within the programme itself which encourage or demand certain audience responses (p.228), and try to ensure that the viewer's participation is direct and immediate: programmes will frequently have a studio audience to cue the "correct" response for viewers at home, for instance. Audiences come to know what to expect of various personae, develop attitudes towards them, and learn how to respond (p.219).

As echoed by Langer (1981), Horton and Wohl state that through regular, dependable appearances, the persona offers a continuing, unchanging, predictable relationship. Importantly, audience members feel that they "know" a persona - fans especially believe they know and understand the persona better than casual viewers - and may consider them a friend, counsellor, comforter, and model (p.217). Futhermore, Horton and Wohl argue that over time fans will build up shared experiences - from both the persona's public and private lives - to enhance their association and bond (p.216).

Horton and Wohl talk about "a general propaganda" which surrounds personae (p.220). They say that, "Its major theme is that the performer should be loved and admired. Every attempt possible is made to strengthen the illusion of reciprocity and rapport in order to offset the inherent impersonality of the media themselves" (ibid.). Key terms in the jargon of publicity campaigns are therefore that a performer should have "heart", be "sincere", appear "real" and "warm". For its part, the audience is expected to contribute to the persona's success through loyalty (ibid.).

However, Horton and Wohl claim that the image a persona presents is to some extent a construct, a facade, which they say bears little resemblance to his private character: this

is in contradiction to the appreciation of him as a "real" person (p.226). They go on to say that the facade is maintained by concealing discrepancies between the personality's public image and their private life (ibid.). Private lives are not kept secret since they are of such interest to the public, but are created so as to be acceptable. Even in 1956, Horton and Wohl talk about the current vogue of magazines claiming to expose the person behind the persona. Clearly their discussion here links with the doubts raised earlier in this thesis about the authenticity of personality presenters.

Horton and Wohl attribute the public's preoccupation with the private lives of personae to the confirmation and enrichment of the para-social relation with them (ibid.). They see it as an effort to confirm a relation which is an illusion, to overcome the limitations of the relationship. Knowledge about the persona's personal life is assurance that beyond the illusion there is a real person. Many members of the audience take the further step of actually attempting to establish real contact with the persona by writing to or meeting them (p.227). In extreme cases the fan may be "in love" with the persona and demand real reciprocity which the para-social relation cannot provide (ibid.). Horton and Wohl give the example of a young woman who has fallen in love with a television star and writes to the advice column in a newpaper.[5] She has made an immense investment in this relationship and has begun to rearrange and reorder her life accordingly. Her attachment to the persona has invaded her everyday life and is affecting her attitude to other men (ibid.). Horton and Wohl touch on "extreme para-sociability" (p.223) towards the end of their article, as they do the "compensatory" function of the para-social (p.222).

"For the great majority of the audience," they say, "the para-social is complementary to normal social life. It provides a social milieu in which the everyday assumptions and understandings of primary group interaction and sociability are demonstrated and reaffirmed" (p.223). Indeed Horton and Wohl have discussed the fact that para-social interaction may even provide viewers with the opportunity to enact different roles; to explore new role possibilities or future role anticipations for example (p.222). However they go on to say that for certain types of people (e.g., the isolated and lonely), para-social attachments are compensatory and that when the para-social relationship becomes a substitute for real social participation it can be regarded as pathological. It is unfortunate that subsequent research (reviewed in the next section of this chapter) has tended to focus on the para-social as compensatory, and that likewise contemporary public discourse associates the phemonenon with pathology, despite Horton and Wohl's claims (for the great majority) to the contrary.

In the conclusion to their article they say that para-social interaction is "analogous to and in many ways resembles social interaction in ordinary primary groups" (p.228). Having reiterated this point throughout the article, they stress here that they see no discontinuity between everyday and para-social experience:

> The relationship of the devotee to the persona is, we suggest, experienced as of the same order as, and related to, the network of actual social relations. This, we believe, is even more the case when the persona becomes a common object to the members of the primary groups in which the spectator carries on his everyday life. As a matter of fact, it seems profitable to consider the interaction with the persona as a phase of the role-enactments of the spectator's daily life. (ibid.)

Their middle point that a persona is known by others in an individual's social group is one worth greater emphasis and consideration, for not only do we each as individuals know a media personality, "we all know" popular media figures. What may initially in the moment of consumption be a personal social transaction between an individual audience member and a television presenter, is incorporated into our broader, group social interactions. Horton and Wohl, who claim that their observations are intended as suggestions for further work, believe it would be rewarding to "learn in detail how these para-social interactions are integrated into the matrix of usual social activity" (ibid.); to ask and discover how the personae, who are part of the lives of millions of people, are assimilated (p.229).

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[1]More recently, Tolson (1998) has pointed out that broadcast talk addresses its audiences in a variety of ways and, recognising the "generic diversity and complexity in forms of broadcast talk" (p.11), he has suggested there is both a spectrum and a mix of direct address in broadcasting. There are specific modes of address to specific audiences: from the mode of address of sociable broadcasting, to the more indirect or general address of traditional news interviewing.

[2]Meyrowitz (1985) explains that, in his theory of the evolution of the media, Paul Levinson argues that, "human beings use media to recreate as 'natural' and as 'human' a means of communicating as possible" (p.121). Thus it can be said that the more the mediated communication resembles interpersonal communication, the more the para-social relationship is enhanced.

[3]Tolson (1985, p.19) contests Ellis's assertion that television makes a consistent attempt to present its recorded material as live. As Tolson points out, much of television's output also appears recorded, as in documentary for example. Tolson proposes, rather, that television constructs a hierarchy of apparently live and apparently recorded images, in which 'liveness' takes precedence over 'recording'. It is also recognised that direct address takes precedence over indirect address.

[4]Scannell (1996) devotes a chapter of his book to the "sociability" of broadcasting. He claims that, "Sociability is the most fundamental characteristic of broadcasting's communicative ethos" (p.23), and he highlights the sociable intention of a programme like radio's *Have a Go!* Broadcasting's intended sociableness (due to its talking to domestic audiences) was discussed in detail in Chapter One of this thesis. Scannell reiterates what he considers to be Simmel's fundamental point about sociable talk: "it is not what is said, but how it is said that matters" (p.55).

[5]Horton and Wohl mention it is significant that the man is a local performer and as such her chance of actually meeting him must seem greater. A similar point was made, with reference to Northam (1997, March 1), in the discussion of stalking in Chapter One.

Investigating Para-Social Interaction

This section considers a number of empirical studies that have investigated para-social interaction. Horton and Wohl's theory seems to have been first taken up by the "uses and gratifications" approach to the study of mass communications, which draws on the field of social psychology. Although these studies are, therefore, very different from this project both theoretically and methodologically, it is nonetheless valuable to include and review this material. (This project's theoretical framework and method are explained in the introduction to this thesis.) Before looking at individual studies, however, this section begins by providing an outline and a critique of the uses and gratifications tradition.

The uses and gratifications approach is recognised as the second key perspective in the history of audience studies (e.g., Morley, 1989, p.16). It advanced the debate because, unlike effects research, it credited audiences with having an active role in their media consumption. It repudiated the dominant question "What do the media do to people?" and its assumptions about the passive reception of powerful media messages, asking instead, "What do people do with the media?" (Swanson, 1979, p.4). Through its recognition of diversity among audiences, uses and gratifications was also the first opposition to the notion of the "mass audience": as noted by Jay Blumler (1979), those working within the tradition "have always been strongly opposed to 'mass audience' terminology as a way of labelling the collectivities that watch TV shows, attend movies, and read magazines and newspapers in their millions" (p.21).

Ien Ang (1990) explains that the starting point for uses and gratifications researchers is that the media are functional for people. Their assumption is that:

> In general, people use the media because they expect that doing so will give them some gratifications - hence the name of this research tradition. These gratifications are assumed to be related to the satisfaction of social and psychological needs experienced by the individual. (p.159)

The beginnings of uses and gratifications research can be traced to the early 1940s (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990, p.210; Rubin, 1986, p.286). However, according to Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rosengren (1985), it was in the decade following the publication of Blumler and Katz's "landmark volume" *The Uses of Mass Communications* in 1974, that research proliferated (p.11). Palmgreen et al. provide a broad review and assessment of this work. As Jensen and Rosengren (1990) explain, the uses and gratifications approach - both theoretically and methodologically - is located in social science.[1] Hence, they note, its conception of the audience as social-psychological entities (p.218), its aim to produce "replicable studies of representative samples from well defined populations" (p.223), its survey approaches and statistical techniques of analysis (p.224). As social-scientific work, they say, it keeps "the phases of theory and hypothesis formation, observation, analysis, interpretation and presentation of results separate from each other. Moreover, the assumption is that the researcher's role in the act of data collection and analysis can and should be minimized" (p.219).

The reasons for using media repeatedly mentioned by respondents in studies have been categorized and typologies developed. A list of motives for and satisfactions from

media use constructed by Denis McQuail (1994, p.320) includes "having a basis for social contact" and also "having a substitute for social contact".

The uses and gratifications tradition has received considerable criticism, which those within the field have acknowledged (e.g., Palmgreen et al., 1985, p.12), summarized (e.g., McQuail, 1998, pp.154-155), and addressed (e.g., Rubin, 1994, pp.422-424). Reviewing various theoretical models of the audience, Ang (1990) highlights several problems with the uses and gratifications approach. Firstly, it is individualistic: it takes into account only individual uses of the media (p.159). She points out that, by ignoring social contexts, no consideration is given to the fact that not all media use is motivated by the pursuit of gratifications. The approach assumes that individuals are willing in their choice of consumption, however this is not necessarily the case. David Morley (1989, p.17) also criticizes the perspective for being individualistic; for limiting its focus to individual psychology. John Tulloch's (1989) criticism rests on the grounds that it is too atomistic and psychologistic: grounds he points out "are familiar enough within cultural studies" (p.195).

The second problem with the uses and gratifications approach identified by Ang (1990) is the lack of attention given to the content of media output (p.160). She claims that researchers concentrate on the reasons why people use media, but overlook what they get out of the experience or the meanings they construct. Recognising that their neglect of "meaning" is a failing which ought to be rectified, some uses and gratifications theorists have looked to building a bridge with cultural studies (Katz, 1979, p.75). Blumler (1979), acknowledging criticism from cultural studies that, "Uses and gratifications research fails to link the functions of mass media consumption with the

symbolic content of the mass-communicated materials or with the actual experience of consuming them" (p.29), questions the possibility of and makes suggestions for "a marriage" between the two approaches (p.30). In his reflections on uses and gratifications research "with the benefit of hindsight", McQuail (1998, p.158) also advocates a more cultural approach. He suggests a return to the bridge-building urged for previously but still not achieved.[2]

The third problem Ang (1990) highlights has to do with the perspective's emphasis on media use as functional (p.160). She accuses the approach of providing justification for the way the media are organised (and thus discouraging change) by focusing on the satisfaction of needs. She claims that, taking into account only what is actually available, it "ignores the possibility that alternative kinds of media output . . . might be even more gratifying for many people" (ibid.). This may well be the case, however Palmgreen et al. (1985) deny they believe needs are always gratified. They stress the importance of distinguishing between "gratifications sought" and "gratifications obtained" (p.27). While the approach's functionalist origins are not disputed, its commitments to that perspective are (Swanson, 1979, p.6). Elihu Katz (1979, p.77), for instance, supports the connection between functionalism and uses and gratifications research. Palmgreen et al. (1985), on the other hand, contend "that current uses and gratifications theory is not functional in nature" (p.35).

Another problem lies with the measurement of gratifications. Lee Becker (1979) highlights the difficulties inherent in the methods of inference and self-report used. In the latter, respondents may only be willing to report gratifications deemed socially acceptable (p.57). As for the former, Graham Murdock (1998, p.212) points out it is

problematical that the needs supposedly underlying particular gratifications can only be inferred.

The main problem with the approach for a Media and Cultural Studies perspective is that measurement is attempted at all: The quantitative treatment of experiences, which are arguably more appropriately studied qualitatively, is not easily accepted from that perspective. McQuail (1998) identifies such a response as a "'cultural' objection" (p.155). The opinion held here is that para-social interaction is much too complex a process to be reduced to a variable that can be measured and categorised or tested as part of a hypothesis. Attempts to attribute it to certain psychological dispositions, which are themselves measured and calculated, are not supported and the approach's underlying assumption that, "the causes of media use are held to lie in social or psychological circumstances which are experienced as problems, and the media are used for problem resolution" (McQuail, 1994, pp.318-319) is also suspect. This study's empirical research involved in-depth interviews with subjects, during which they were asked about the significance and meaning of their para-social relationships in their lives.

This review begins less critically however with a study considered to be interesting and useful. It is perhaps more straightforward or basic than those that follow, but is in many ways the most helpful as a simple "test" of Horton and Wohl's theory. Fredrick Koenig and Gloria Lessan (1985) investigated viewers' relationship to television personalities. Having acknowledged that television personae take on many functions of a companion, they examine where exactly the presenter is placed in viewers' subjective relational space. It is stated:

> Although favorite performers may not be friends in the sense of primary relations, we believe that they may be closer to the viewer than acquaintances or secondary relationships. It is hypothesised that viewers will regard their favorite television performer in an intermediate position of being experienced as closer to the self than acquaintances but not as close as friends. (p.264)

They also hypothesised that of the types of television personalities, news commentators would be ranked closest to self, followed by the talk show host, and then situation-programme characters. This was because they believed news reading involves the most communication focused directly on the viewer.

Their results are based on 195 questionnaires completed by parents and acquaintances of undergraduate psychology students who were taken to be upper-middle-class. The questionnaire included a series of semantic differential scales, using which respondents rated the following terms: best friend, acquaintance, myself, favorite personality on TV news/information programs, favorite person in TV situation programs, and favorite host on talk/variety shows (p.265). The findings reported show the average distance in semantic space between each of these concepts. As hypothesised, it was found that television personalities do hold an intermediate position between friend and acquaintance: in other words, people felt closer to television personalities than to some interpersonal acquaintances. This leads Koenig and Lessan to claim that, "the term 'quasi-friend' appears appropriate in describing the relationship between viewer and a favorite TV personality" (pp.265-266).

Again as hypothesised, newscasters were closest to self in semantic space; but this relationship was limited to male respondents only. Women did not differentiate between presenters in the three programme genres. The researchers suggest that perhaps

women participate vicariously in talk shows and situation programs to a greater extent than do men. It could also be suggested that the male connection with newscasters may reflect the fact that subjects were both upper-middle-class and, as parents, probably middle-aged too, and thus regard news programmes more to their taste.[3]

One of the findings from much earlier exploratory uses and gratifications research carried out by McQuail, Blumler, and Brown (1972), was that audience members experienced companionship in their use of the media; that they did enter into what could be described as a para-social relationship with media personalities (p.157). McQuail et al. report that out of six main programme types, the wish to use the media in this way was most clearly expressed with regard to a domestic radio serial, *The Dales*. The statement most frequently endorsed by questionnaire respondents - "It is good company when you're alone" - reflected the strong element of companionship offered by the programme. Para-social interaction was also represented in another related item in this cluster of results: "The characters have become like close friends to me." McQuail et al. elaborate that their evidence suggests "the characters may become virtually real, knowable and cherished individuals, and their voices are more than just a comforting background which breaks the silence of an empty house" (ibid.).[4] The fact it is noted that this programme is one which attracted a large number of solitary listeners hints at the direction future research would take.

Karl Erik Rosengren and Swen Windahl (1972) consider the human need for social interaction. In their study, which is also framed by the uses and gratifications tradition, they note that the concept of para-social interaction as introduced by Horton and Wohl was the stimulus for their work. Rosengren and Windahl claim that the "natural" way

of satisfying this social need is face-to-face interaction with others, but that mass media consumption is one "functional alternative" (p.168). They go on to propose that where the individual and environmental possibilities for face-to-face social interaction are both satisfactory, mass media use is a supplement (and degree of dependence is low); however where both are unsatisfactory it is a substitute (and degree of dependence is high). They suggest that in-between these situations media use is complementary (p.169). They also point out that the use of the mass media as a functional alternative may be sought for various motives such as change, compensation, escape, or vicarious experience (p.170).

Rosengren and Windahl go on to talk about "degree of involvement", adopting Horton and Wohl's concept of para-social interaction to describe one type of relation between the audience and media figures (p.173). They suggest the possibility of a positive correlation between degree of dependence and degree of involvement; that is, the more dependent an individual is on the media as a functional alternative to real interaction, the higher that individual's degree of involvement will tend to be (p.174). They also hypothesise a positive correlation between degree of involvement and amount of consumption. In addition, they expect preference for certain types of media content to be related to all three variables. As far as para-social interaction is concerned, according to their hypothesis:

> this degree of involvement should tend to be found when degree of dependence is intermediate and mass media are used as a complement to real interaction, in order to obtain compensation for or escape from a societal or individual situtation characterized by certain, sometimes mild, sometimes strong, deficiences. (p.182)

It is believed that those with a higher degree of dependence and who use the media as a substitute with the motive of vicarious experience will prefer purely fictional media content for the purposes of identification (rather than interaction).

Whilst a large part of their essay is theoretical, Rosengren and Windahl do proceed to present some empirical data from two surveys. Their research measured individuals' degree of dependence (i.e., their interaction potential). Environmental factors only were considered here - it is noted with regret that personality traits were not included. Individuals' degree of involvement (i.e., their para-social interaction) and amount of mass media consumption were also measured. The fourth variable taken into account was amount of actual interaction (p.187). It was discovered that:

> Among those who have a low interaction potential, it is much more usual also to have a high degree of involvement than it is among those who have a high interaction potential. The latter usually have a low degree of involvement. (p.189).

This relationship between interaction *potential* and degree of involvement was as expected. However, crucially, no simple positive correlation was found between *actual* interaction and degree of involvement (p.191). Para-social interaction could not therefore be said to be a functional alternative to actual interaction.

Nevertheless, Rosengren and Windahl, who describe the field as being at a preliminary stage, make suggestions for continued research on this topic. It is important to note that although it may appear otherwise because the terms they use (e.g., substitute, compensation) seem judgemental, Rosengren and Windahl make a point of trying to

keep evaluations out of their argument and their intention is to regard people and media as coequal communication alternatives.

Jan-Erik Nordlund (1978) presents a paper similar to that just outlined. Nordlund, whose research was also conducted in Sweden, analyses the involvement between an audience member and a media personality: an involvement he defines as "media interaction". He sets out to test several hypotheses about the origins of such media interaction. The first of these is that if an individual's social and psychological structures inhibit fulfillment of the need for social interaction then the individual will consume much mass media content with a high degree of media interaction potential, using this as a substitute for real interaction (p.156).

Nordlund reports on empirical data obtained from three surveys. To establish a social variable, subjects were asked about the number of friends and acquaintances that comprised their social circle and about the variety and extent of their leisure pursuits. Their level of neuroticism was also measured to give a psychological variable; and a series of statements about media consumption with which they were asked to agree or disagree on a scale was used to measure their media interaction (pp.158-159).

The anticipated associations between a neurotic disposition, limited opportunites for social interaction, and amount of compensatory media usage were found but did not occur at a level strong enough to be statistically significant (p.160). Some evidence did suggest that:

> it was somewhat *more* likely that older people, women, and people without higher education would use the mass media heavily or prefer contents with high

> media interaction potential if their relevant social and psychological structures were such as to indicate limited opportunities for interacting socially. (ibid.)

There also appeared to be a strong association between neuroticism and media interaction (p.161). It had been assumed that high exposure to the mass media would covary with a high level of media interaction and the results were as expected: quite strong associations emerged between amount of media exposure and media interaction (p.163). The findings also showed that media interaction can lead to greater dependency on the mass media as well as a tendency to use the mass media in certain situations of stress and loneliness (pp.171-172).

Nordlund sees mass media patronage as a brand of escapism and concludes by expressing concern about what he terms the important but unknown long-term effects of media interaction (p.173). Although he recognises that this is a common phenomenon and is probably part of most people's everyday lives, he believes it to be passive and vicarious (ibid.). Therefore he claims that an understanding of its consequences is urgent.

One aspect of Nordlund's work that is believed to be relevant and useful to this research project is what he has to say about *media interaction potential*. Throughout his article Nordlund asserts that certain media and media contents have a higher degree of *media interaction potential* than others (p.152). Thus media interaction seems to be a highly content (or genre) specific phenomenon. His results confirm that an individual's content preference is a very powerful predictor of their media interaction (p.165).

Mark Levy (1979) examines the nature of the interaction between television newscasters and their viewers to discover whether news audiences engage in para-social activity. Following Horton and Wohl's conception, he seems to recognise that the mass media have created a *new form* of social interaction which audiences experience as they do primary relationships (p.69). He credits the audience with the ability to interact and to behave reciprocally. And importantly, again unlike Nordlund (1978), he acknowledges that for most audience members para-social interaction is complementary to social life (p.70). However in his study Levy fails to avoid concentrating on para-social interaction as a compensatory activity. He tests the following two hypotheses which question the social and behavioural correlates of para-social interaction (ibid.):

> H1: The more opportunites an individual has for social interaction, the less likely it is that he or she will engage in a para-social relationship with news personae;
>
> H2: The stronger an individual's para-social interaction with television news personae, the more television news he or she will watch.

From the analysis of focused group discussions held with two dozen adults, seven propositions were eventually selected as possible indicators of para-social interaction. 240 adults were then randomly selected for a personal interview, during which they were asked to indicate their support for each proposition. Each respondent's level of gregariousness (ranked according to their number of friendships and memberships in voluntary associations) was also taken into account, as was their rate of exposure to television news, and whether they usually watch alone or with company (p.71).

Levy claims the results strongly suggest "that para-social interaction with news personae is a common feature of the audience experience with television news" (p.72). More

than half of respondents agreed that newscasters are almost like the friends one sees every day (it is noted that they are not confused with actual friends). Levy quotes a response from a focus group participant, which he claims suggests that, "the para-social relationship develops over time and is based in part on a history of 'shared' experiences" (ibid.): this supports an observation made by Horton and Wohl. Levy notes that some participants had actually met the newscasters and looked forward to meeting them again (either in person or on television). Other focus group members said they occasionally responded to the newscaster's opening greeting or sign-off with a friendly salutation or reciprocating remark of their own (ibid.). Furthermore, 25% said that the newscaster's absence (when off on vacation) "upset" them (ibid.). Levy claims his findings reflect a sense of companionship with news personae who can be an antidote to loneliness and even fear for viewers living alone (p.74).

The data give some support to the inverse relationship between real social interaction and para-social interaction hypothesised (H1) (p.75). More specifically, it was found that the degree of para-social interaction increases with respondent age and the strength of the para-social relationship varies inversely with viewer education. Levy interprets both as supporting the first hypothesis (p.76). However repondent gregariousness was only weakly correlated (ibid.). Levy also claims that the data give clear support to the second hypothesis (p.77): an important determinant of how much television news some people will watch is their desire to maintain a para-social relationship. Levy says, "Those viewers who find the para-social relationship particularly attractive or gratifying increase their exposure in order to increase 'contact' with the news personae" (p.78).

While Levy presents some interesting findings, it is important to comment on the fact that he has considered only news audiences' para-social interactions with news broadcasters. Nordlund (1978) has indicated that media interaction is a highly content specific phenomenon and it is debatable that news broadcasts have a high degree of media interaction potential. Unlike the personae presenting personality programmes, who Horton and Wohl argue exist primarily for para-social interaction, the news broadcasters' main role is to convey information (albeit in a manner that may be conducive to para-social interaction). In Levy's study 52% of respondents agreed with a proposition likening newcasters to friends: but a large percentage, 36%, disagreed with the comparison (p.73). It is possible to speculate that these figures would be higher and lower respectively if subjects were asked about the type of media personae Horton and Wohl focus on. Having said that however, this study does not support the view that para-social interaction is best understood by attempting to isolate and quantify it, because it is experienced as part of a complex mix of various forms of interaction in everyday life.

Other researchers have observed para-social interaction in general news viewing (Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rayburn, 1980) and in local television news (Houlberg, 1984). This is one reason Rubin, Perse, and Powell (1985) give for choosing to examine para-social interaction in relation to this genre. Acknowledging that, despite the efforts of previous uses and gratifications researchers, a social deficiency motivation had not been strongly related to para-social interaction, Rubin et al. take a psychologically oriented approach in their attempt to explain the development of para-social relationships (p.157). They concentrate on "loneliness", taken as an internal psychological state and which in their study was conceptualized as "a *discrepancy* between the amount of

interaction individuals need and the amount that they perceive is fulfilled" (p.158). One of their investigation's two main objectives was to link psychological need to media use and its outcomes (p.171). It was expected that para-social interaction would result from an initial state of loneliness. However, no relationship between loneliness and para-social interaction with a favourite local news personality was apparent in their findings from 329 questionnaires (p.168). Discussing their results they point out that, "The motivating need for parasocial interaction may stem from an active bonding with a personality who is perceived as real and similar, rather than the initially speculated deficiency motivation" (p.175).

Another primary objective of the investigation was to develop a reliable empirical measure of para-social interaction and Rubin et al. outline how this was achieved (p.166). Firstly a variety of items that could be indicants of para-social interaction were generated, then a total of 29 were constructed and presented to respondents who indicated the level of their agreement with each statement. When nonsalient and redundant items were eliminated, a 20-item "Parasocial Interaction Scale" for local television news personalites was the result and is provided in the paper (p.167). The researchers note that they hope the scale will be developed and adapted for other genres. Indeed, in the study by Rubin and McHugh (1987) described below, it was successfully adapted from newcasters to "favorite television performer" (p.285).

Alan Rubin and Elizabeth Perse (1987) also revised the scale for television soap operas, reducing it to 10 items (p.254). In this investigation of college students' involvement with soap opera, there appears to be the beginnings of a more positive approach to the para-social. Para-social interaction was taken as "affective participant involvement"

with media personalities "based on normal interpersonal expectations and processes" (p.248). It was thought likely that para-social interaction indicates active and involving television use, and this was borne out by the research. It was found that para-social interaction was "linked to more instrumental viewing motives, stronger attitudes, and greater activity" (p.263).

Rubin and Perse's 10-item scale was used to measure para-social interaction in a later study by Joseph Conway and Alan Rubin (1991). Their objective was "to explore the psychological origins of media gratifications by examining how pertinent psychological variables . . . help explain television viewing motivation" (p.443). Para-social interaction was taken as one of eight psychological antecedents or predictors. Based on the findings of Rubin et al. (1985) and Rubin and Perse (1987), as described above, Conway and Rubin hypothesised that, "Higher levels of parasocial interaction will predict information and entertainment viewing motivation" (p.449). The results supported the hypothesis (p.456). In fact, para-social interaction helped explain most (four out of six) viewing motives (p.458). According to Conway and Rubin:

> This suggests that parasocial interaction is a salient component of viewing intention and selection. It may be more important for viewing intent and expectations than a program's content. Parasocial interaction was even linked with using the medium to fill time. (p.458)

Rubin and Perse's (1987) 10-item scale was also used by Grant, Guthrie, and Ball-Rokeach (1991, p.787) in their study of television shopping. They included two items from the original 20-item Parasocial Interaction Scale (Rubin et al., 1985, p.167) and two new items specifically designed to assess the home shopping experience.

However Elizabeth Perse and Rebecca Rubin (1989) note that there is disagreement among researchers about how to measure para-social interaction and they claim that:

> Although researchers have searched for sociological antecedents (potential for and amount of actual interaction) and psychological antecedents (neurosis, introversion, and loneliness) to the development of parasocial interaction, a clear link has not been found. (p.60)

They continue that:

> This lack of significant findings may be the result of an assumption by researchers that parasocial interaction was an *atypical* consequence of television viewing. The growing evidence of its existence in many different samples and viewing situations, however, indicates that parasocial interaction is a normal consequence of television viewing. People may naturally feel a sense of friendship with personae they watch over time and feel that they have come to know. (p.61)

Perse and Rubin's own research reflects this shift of focus away from the assumption of deficiencies and the presumed need for compensation in relation to para-social interaction. Instead it is recognised that the development of para-social relationships is more appropriately regarded as a "natural" and inevitable response to television viewing.

Perse and Rubin's (1989) study was designed to compare and contrast social and para-social relationships. They expected that by doing so they would gain a better understanding of the latter, which they define as "a perceived interpersonal relationship on the part of a television viewer with a mass media persona" (p.59). They believe that mediated communication and interpersonal communication have much in common, including the fact that people use the same cognitive processes for both. Their study

investigates these cognitive processes. They tested the applicability of two interpersonal cognitive frameworks - uncertainty reduction theory (URT) and personal construct theory (PCT) - to the development of social and para-social relationships (ibid.). URT assumes that the reduction of uncertainty enhances relationships and PCT is about forming impressions of others.

Perse and Rubin focused exclusively on para-social relationships with soap opera characters and their subject sample comprised 105 undergraduate students who completed questionnaires. They tested seven hypotheses and statistical analysis revealed that para-social relationships with soap opera characters were based, to some extent, on reduction of uncertainty and the ability to predict accurately the feelings and attitudes of the persona: this is similar to social relationships. Having presented their findings, Perse and Rubin conclude that URT and PCT do increase understanding of para-social interaction (p.74) and claim that their results demonstrate the usefulness of applying interpersonal frameworks to media contexts. [They also note that this study can be added to the list of studies that have been unable to link para-social interaction to psychological characteristics (p.73).]

In an earlier study, Rebecca Rubin and Michael McHugh (1987) also used interpersonal relationship theories to study the para-social. Claiming that para-social relationships resemble interpersonal relationships in many ways, they explore the possibility of a parallel pattern of development. Applying principles from uncertainty reduction theories, they proposed that para-social interaction results from both exposure to and attraction for a media personality and that it leads to a perception that the relationship is important (p.281). A questionnaire, completed by 303 students, was used to measure

these four factors: para-social interaction, length of viewing time, interpersonal attraction, and perceived importance. Attraction was split into three components: social, physical, and task.

Rubin and McHugh found that there was a low significant correlation between length of viewing and para-social interaction, but no relation between length of viewing and attraction (p.286). As hypothesised, para-social interaction correlated significantly with social, physical, and task attraction (p.287). Physical attraction was the least important. There was also significant support for their prediction that relationship importance is related to para-social interaction.

The main finding then was that "parasocial interaction was related strongly to social and task attraction towards the media personality, and to importance of relationship development with the personality" (p.288). What this means is that social attraction in particular appears to be a precursor to (and predictor of) para-social interaction and the growth of relationships with favourite personalities. This is because the relationship is most rewarding for viewers when the personality is socially attractive to them. Rubin and McHugh discuss the fact that therefore in this respect interpersonal and mediated relationships seem to follow a similar process of development. However the findings of their study contrast with interpersonal theories that increased attraction should result from greater levels of exposure (uncertainty reduction) to a person. Their results indicate that a relationship with a persona is not a matter of sheer exposure (p.289). Therefore it is concluded that only some of the principles of uncertainty reduction theory hold in media relationships but that interpersonal communication theories do

have a contribution to make to understanding the relationships viewers have with television personalities.[5]

The final study that will be outlined in this section was carried out by Grant, Guthrie, and Ball-Rokeach (1991). They examine the phenomenon of television shopping from a media system dependency perspective: clearly some researchers continue to associate para-social interaction with deviance. They propose a hierarchy of dependency relations, "with television dependency leading to dependency upon a genre of TV programming and, ultimately, to the development of parasocial relationships with the hosts of specific programs" (p.773). They report an empirical analysis of television shoppers and their viewing and purchasing behaviour (p.775).

Grant et al. begin by explaining that it is unknown whether the new genre of television shopping offers a significantly different viewing experience from the programming it competes with. They consider the presence or absence of para-social interaction to be an indicator of its similarity or difference (p.779). They believe that television shopping shows would seem to be fertile grounds for developing para-social relationships and they outline four features of the genre's format which they see as maximizing para-social interaction (p.781). Firstly, the shows are live or appear to be live and this gives viewers the sense of "being there". Secondly, hosts use a chatty style and directly address the audience. Thirdly, the living room set encourages viewers to see the show as an extension of their home. Fourthly, the audience is given the opportunity to make contact by purchasing merchandise and the hosts continually invite viewers to phone in. Grant et al. found that the viewers of television shopping programmes do often develop

para-social relationships with the hosts and it is concluded that their viewing experience is therefore not unlike that of more traditional types of programming (p.795).

Their hypothesis that, "Dependency upon the television shopping genre will lead to great parasocial interaction with personalities hosting programs of that genre" was strongly supported (p.791). Their hypothesis that, "The degree of parasocial interaction with television shopping personalities will be positively related to age and negatively related to education" was not supported (ibid.). They say that the "lack of any significant relationship between demographic variables and parasocial interaction provides further support . . . that parasocial relationships . . . are a typical part of television viewing and are not unique to any specific demographic group" (p.794). Their hypothesis that, "The more intense the parasocial relationship, the greater the probability that viewers will purchase products via television shopping" was rejected (p.791).

Grant et al.'s research supports their proposed hierarchy of dependency relations. They claim their findings suggest that "individuals who already have a strong dependency relationship with a new media genre, such as television shopping, in turn develop parasocial relationships with television shopping personalities" (p.793). Furthermore, they found that the strength of the dependency relation is more important than the amount of time viewed in predicting para-social relationships (p.795). They also say that while television and genre dependency is necessary for viewers to develop para-social relationships, once established, this relationship then fosters more intense media dependency relationships (p.794).

In conclusion, the studies reviewed in this section are mostly framed by the uses and gratifications approach and, as is particularly evident from the earlier pieces, their focus has largely been on the use of media for the gratification of need. Thus the tendency has been to regard para-social interaction as compensatory, its gratifying a need for those who lack the ability or social opportunity for what is defined as "real" and "natural" face-to-face interaction. Para-social interaction has also been associated with dependency on the media. The findings have on the whole been inconclusive but, overall, whilst they may be linked to general media usage, social and psychological deficiencies or demographic antecedents have not been strongly related to para-social interaction. Therefore it has been suggested that para-social interaction is a normal response to personalities who invite audiences to reciprocate socially. Researchers have come to realise that it is mistaken to treat para-social interaction as an *atypical* behaviour, arguing instead that it is a *typical* part of television viewing. This is a conceptual advance welcomed in this thesis. Their research supports the view that the development of para-social relationships is based, to a certain extent, on usual interpersonal processes.

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[1]Looking at the main characteristics of five audience research traditions, Jensen and Rosengren (1990) claim that there are two main types of theory - social scientific and humanistic - and two corresponding forms of methodology reflecting the distinction between quantitative and qualitative approaches (p.219).

[2]Ang (1989) expresses reservations about calls for convergence between what she refers to as "mainstream" uses and gratifications and "critical" cultural studies. One concern she has relates to the fact that the convergence "tends to be conceptualized as an exclusively 'scientific' enterprise" (p.102), and that therefore theory which is not empirically testable risks being dismissed as "unscientific" (p.103).

[3]Morley (1986) writes about television and gender in relation to programme type preferences. In his study he found that masculinity was primarily identified with a strong preference for "factual" programmes (p.162).

[4]It is worth noting that the original series, *Mrs Dale's Diary*, regularly had as its opening the line, "I'm worried about Jim [her fictional husband]."

[5]This research project also found social attraction to be central to the development of para-social relationships, and discovered that familiarity is not a precursor (see Chapter Five).

Towards a more Cultural Approach

In the later studies outlined in the previous section, the more useful theory that para-social relationships in many ways resemble those of an interpersonal nature was expressed and studied. The very different framework within which Gary Gumpert and Robert Cathcart (1986) consider para-social interaction is in accord with this view. They are concerned with communication; more specifically with interpersonal communication in a media world. Throughout their book, *Inter/media*, the interconnectedness of media and interpersonal communication is stressed. Gumpert and Cathcart explain that human communication and relationships have been changed as a result of technology's ability to connect and transcend time and space. Yet they maintain that all human communication, whether face-to-face or mass, is still basically interpersonal (p.19). They introduce the concept of "mediated interpersonal communication" and regard "media simulated interpersonal interaction" (which includes para-social interaction) as one variation of this general category (p.30).

However, despite this promising approach in which the focus could be on the *extending* of social relationships, in their discussion of para-social interaction they too assume that it functions as a substitute for face-to-face relationships (p.32). In addition, Gumpert and Cathcart make the somewhat wild accusation that because the para-social relationship is based upon an ideal, many people come to feel that their own interpersonal relationships are inadequate and that this "leads to increased feelings of alienation and a greater reliance upon mass media for interpersonal satisfaction" (p.33). They point out that while we have come to respect some forms of mediated interpersonal communications, such as letters, uncertainties are raised when intimate

communication involves newer technological forms of communication (p.167). In the section of their edited book entitled "Media, Intimacy and Interpersonal Networks" they question what it means when we are more "intimate" with media personalities than we are with people who are physically close to us.

This reflects what seems to be the general public view that, not only are they compensatory, para-social relationships are pathological. This belief appears to be borne out occasionally in cases of extreme para-sociability. In the prologue to his book - a book that is important for this thesis - John Caughey (1984) writes about three such relationships. In each case, the strong emotional attachments a person had for a public figure has influenced them in their carrying out an attack.

On 14 June 1949 baseball player Eddie Waitkus was shot by "one of his greatest fans", eighteen-year-old Ruth Steinhagen, who had never met or communicated with him but had been "in love" with him for two years. She decided to kill Waitkus because as she could not have him herself, she did not want anyone else to either. She did not stand trial for attempted murder, but was instead committed to a mental hospital (pp.1-2). On 8 December 1980 John Lennon was shot dead by fan Mark David Chapman. Lennon had been a major figure of admiration and emulation in Chapman's life for fifteen years. Resentment is believed to have been a motive (pp.3-4). On 30 March 1981 President Ronald Reagan was shot in an attempted assassination. The assailant, John Hinckley, was a fan of actress Jodie Foster. Through the attack (which he called an "historical deed") he hoped to gain her respect and love (pp.4-6).

As Caughey points out, there have been dozens of attacks on celebrities and death threats against public figures, and he claims the problem has become a pattern in American society (p.2). In cases like the three referred to above, the relationship the assailant had - fantasy or imaginary in nature - is seen as evidence of their mental abnormality. An individual's developing an intense emotional connection to someone they have never actually met, is interpreted here as pathological, as a symptom of their being mentally disturbed. Such a relationship is one which seemingly drives a person to carry out crazy acts. Caughey claims that, while on one level justified, on another this interpretation is mistaken (p.6). He is not denying that the three individuals were mentally ill in some way, but he is arguing that their illness cannot be accounted for by reference to their imaginary relationship (p.7). He takes this position because he believes having imaginary relationships is not abnormal and ought not to be characterised as such.

Caughey's work is a valuable contribution to the study of para-social relationships because it takes a cultural approach - Caughey has a background of anthropological research – and will therefore be presented here at length. Both his argument and the findings he presents are most useful, although his theoretical framework is not entirely in keeping with the way in which para-social interaction is conceptualized in this study: his book is entitled *Imaginary Social Worlds* and, as will be explained later, media experience in not regarded as imaginary in this thesis. Caughey wants to develop a cultural and social approach to the imaginary worlds that humans experience. His research took what he describes as an ethnographic approach. He mainly conducted interviews with informants and this produced data of introspective self-reports (p.25). He also used himself as an informant: that is, he says, he monitored and recorded his

own imaginary experiences and used his own introspections to check against the reports of his informants (ibid.).

Caughey says it is claimed that social relationships are a fundamental part of life in every society but it is assumed that what is meant in the claim is *actual social relations between real people* (p.17). However Caughey argues that this traditional approach is incomplete because it has neglected imaginary social relationships: he gives the example of human-spirit relationships and interactions in non-Western cultures (ibid.). According to Caughey, because imaginary social relationships are "a complex, pervasive, and significant dimension of American social life" too, an adequate understanding of American society demands that this be studied (p.23). Caughey's book deals with imaginary social relationships and interactions in dreams, in the stream of consciousness (memories, anticipations), in fantasy, in hallucinations, and also in media involvement. Throughout the book Caughey includes the world of the media as an imaginary world alongside the dream world and the schizophrenic world: something not thought to be helpful because, again as will elaborated later, the media world is regarded as part of the "real" world in this thesis. What is helpful here is Caughey's argument that all the worlds he examines are typically *social* worlds. For example, he says that a striking characteristic of American dreams is the prevalence of social interactions. In his sample of 222 dreams, over 97% involved social encounters (p.89).

Caughey devotes the second chapter of his book to what he calls the imaginary world of media consumption. He begins by talking about the fact that in American society a person is required to know about media figures (p.31). It is assumed that, through media consumption, he/she will know and possess (often extensive and personal)

information about a huge number of these unmet beings who come from many different fields such as sports, politics, music, and showbusiness. Caughey points out that this information is necessary for understanding much media output, but that it is also socially essential because so many conversations are about media figures (p.32). For strangers, shared knowledge of this sort can even form the basis for striking up a conversation and socializing. Caughey states that, "Information about media figures is a core aspect of American cultural knowledge" (p.33).

Caughey introduces the term "pseudo mutual acquaintances" to describe how media figures can be thought about and he talks about people engaging in "pseudo social interactions" with them (ibid.). Throughout his writing Caughey refers to both the real people and the fictional characters who appear in the media making up an "artificial social world" (p.32). Media consumers experience "artificial social involvement" in this world (p.33). According to Caughey, all forms of media consumption involve a mental transportation from the real social world to an "artificial world of vicarious social experience" (p.34). Americans spend much of their time in the "other worlds" of the media, learning from a young age how to participate there. As Caughey stresses, it is important to recognise that these other worlds are *social* worlds with elaborate systems of *social interaction* (p.35). These pseudo social interactions dominate media consumption.

Caughey says that a media consumer connects to a media world because it seems real: the images are vivid and immediate. A seeming reality, those who appear are understood as *people* and are interpreted socially (p.36). He goes on to propose that often an individual goes beyond observing and, drawn into a pseudo relationship with a

media being, enters into or participates in the other world. Individuals may then find themselves "interacting" with the media figures who address them directly and personally and that here "media consumption directly parallels actual social interaction" (p.37). He introduces Horton and Wohl's arguments to elaborate this point: people respond to media figures as they would to members of their primary social group. They therefore have strong feelings about media figures (e.g., when a media figure dies people can experience a sense of loss) and characterize these strangers as if they were intimately involved with them (p.33). Of course people may respond to a media figure in an antagonistic way but, as Caughey points out, they are nonetheless engaged in a pseudo interaction, albeit a hostile one (p.38). Caughey notes furthermore that social involvement with media figures is not confined to the moments of actual media consumption (p.39).

Caughey goes on to write about "fans". The fact that the term "fan" is the word most commonly used to describe someone with an interest in a media figure reflects he says, "the lack of a precise vocabulary with which to specify the kinds of relationships that actually exist between media figures and media consumers" (p.40). He claims the term, with its negative derivation, is inadequate as it does not do justice to the variety and the real structure of "fans'" attachments to media figures (ibid.).

Having interviewed a number of "fans" about the nature of their attachment to their chosen media figure, Caughey came to the conclusion that the basis of most fan relationships is a social relationship. Fans' attachments to media figures are very similar to those of actual social relationships; and fans describe their fan relationships in these

terms. So media figures are related to as "fathers", "sisters", "friends", "lovers", and so on (p.40).

Caughey writes at length about fans' love relationships with media figures. Such romantic attachments are a common phenomenon he suggests, having gathered information from research with seventy-two Americans who claim to be or have been in love with a media star (p.41). He claims that the manner in which the subjects describe their feelings indicates that the relationship is as intense as a "real" love affair. Caughey considers what exactly these love relationships involve (p.42). They include regular and intense consumption; mass media productions are taken as *personal* communications; collecting is standard; fans will be interested in seemingly insignificant details; and, "The figure's career successes and setbacks are taken seriously and emotionally, as are personal events such as a sickness in the celebrity's family" (p.43). Caughey claims that fans also typically take up parallel activities and gives the example of a young woman whose interest in Prince Charles led her to take up his favourite sports (p.44).

Caughey also mentions that fans may communicate with the celebrity: for example, in fan letters.[1] However what he calls "pseudo communications" seem more common: typical behaviour here would be talking to or kissing a poster of the star (p.45). He also claims that fantasy interactions are *characteristic* of this type of relationship (ibid.). He reports that one common fantasy involves meeting the star who then falls instantly in love with the fan, and that many fantasies focus on the courtship and happy marriage that follow. He defines "groupies" as "celebrity seekers who have managed to turn a fantasy attraction into a 'real' relationship" by meeting the subject of their fantasies

(p.46). However he goes on to point out that few people seriously attempt an actual encounter, realizing that the fantasy is better.

According to Caughey, romantic fan relationships are common among - although certainly not exclusive to - adolescent girls (p.47): it is normal to have a crush on a star at some stage in your teenage years. He says that culturally this is quite acceptable, in a way it might not be for males - he notes that men do also have such relationships but tend to be less open about it - or for people who are older. Caughey demonstrates that fantasy love relationships regularly extend beyond adolescence and can, in fact, last throughout a person's life. He gives the example of an elderly woman with grown-up children who has had a "lifelong affair" with Frank Sinatra (ibid.).

Fan love relationships are often regarded as filling a gap in the person's real social life, compensating for an unsatisfying social situation: in other words, the media lover is a substitute for a real life lover. While he acknowledges that this may sometimes be the case, Caughey points out that such a view does not explain why, as he found, artificial love relations often continue after an actual romantic relationship is entered into (p.49). He says it is incorrect to assume that the imaginary lover will disappear when the real lover appears or that real love relationships are necessarily better than imaginary ones where, in fantasy, anything is possible (p.50). Caughey goes so far as to claim that love relationships with unmet media figures "represent a significant, and pervasive, culture pattern in modern American society" (p.49). He claims that contemporary media are conducive to the development of such relationships: television gives us the seeming reality of intimate face-to-face contact, which encourages emotional reactions.

Caughey goes on to talk about a second type of relationship, again directly paralleling an actual social relationship, which a person may enter into with a media figure. This is based on antagonism (p.51). He says people frequently despise media figures with a level of hostility that, considering they have never actually met the person, is astonishing. The basis of this type of artificial relationship is hatred, anger, and disgust (p.52). Several of Caughey's subjects mentioned watching a show for the pleasure of hating the presenter. He describes how, through their mutual dislike of a TV evangelist, three young men regularly joined together in a kind of "opposite of a fan club" and would regularly watch his show to laugh at and ridicule him (ibid.). As with the love relationship, such antagonistic relationships also involve fantasy: fantasies of violence for example.

Thankfully perhaps, Caughey reports that relationships based on an intense admiration for a media figure are more common and significant (p.53). Once again much more than simply an aesthetic appreciation is involved. He says that, "Characteristically, the admired figure comes to represent some combination of idol, hero, alter ego, mentor, and role model" (ibid.), and that, "Again people frequently characterize the attraction by comparing it to a real social relationship. They speak of their hero as a 'friend', 'older sister', 'father figure', 'guide' or 'mentor'" (ibid.). Similarly the fantasy element of admiration relationships links the fan *socially* with the admired media figure. From his conversations with fans, Caughey discovered that in their fantasies they establish "a close and intimate social relationship" with their idol (p.56): this may be a friendship, or as a relative, or sibling for example.

As with love relationships, both collecting and intense (and repeated) media consumption are typical fan behaviours here. Caughey also points out that during this consumption, the fan's involvement tends to be sympathetic and emotional, and that their identification is usually significant. This identification can also be imitative. An admired media figure can sometimes act as a guide for a fan's actions: the fan may copy their appearance or, further still, adopt their values and behaviour (p.59). Looking to the celebrity as a mentor may be either unconscious or deliberate. The fact that media figures are used as role models, and as such influence social values/goals/attitudes and conduct, leads Caughey into a debate about media effects (p.60). Following his line of argument, media heroes can be implicated in the imitation of violence (p.63) or an antisocial media figure may shape the deviant behaviour of a fan (p.62). Of course, he points out that these media effects can also be positive (p.67): a figure can support and encourage prosocial, positive values. This positive influence can last throughout adult life even if in a slightly different way. Caughey notes, "Sometimes these adult relationships involve less imitation and more in the way of a critical appreciation of the figure's life and philosophy" (p.69).

Whilst media figures are probably influential as role models, it is necessary to advocate caution about accepting any claim, such as that made by Caughey, that they affect actual behaviour, because it is doubtful that the media can have such direct effects. Papa, Singhal, and Law (1998) make a more careful and persuasive argument about the effects of para-social interaction. They examined the link between para-social interaction and social change by carrying out a study of an Indian radio soap opera and its listeners. They claim that *Tinka Tinka Sukh* is a programme that led to some high levels of para-social interaction between its audience members and its characters (p.18).[2] In the

abstract to their paper they state that, "When listeners develop parasocial relationships with the characters of an entertainment-education program they may be motivated to consider changes in their own personal attitudes and behaviors."

However, they stress that the mass media alone seldom produce social change. Rather, they argue that para-social interaction leads to conversations among audience members about the media stimulus. It is these conversations which can create a social learning environment as people consider the adoption of new patterns of thought and behaviour that are socially meaningful. Thus Papa et al. contend that "parasocial interaction with characters in entertainment-education programs can initiate a process of social change by influencing the thinking of audience members" (p.6). Therefore although para-social relationships can not directly cause social change, they may play a role in facilitating the process. Throughout their study Papa et al. emphasize that the social change process is not straightforward but is complicated and circuitous (e.g., a person may claim to hold one opinion, while their behaviour reflects another). Papa et al.'s argument is thus analogous to the two-step flow model of media effects. (O'Sullivan, Dutton, & Rayner, 1994, p.154, succinctly explain the two-step flow process.)

Since intense relationships with media figures are so often treated with derision, Caughey mentions that people often recall them with embarrassment (p.65). This cultural pattern is, he claims, worthy of analysis in its own right. Imitative role modelling seems to strike people as amusing; even though we all become the people we are through positive and negative role modelling on figures in our social environment. It is perfectly reasonable to choose a media figure as a hero figure. Caughey claims that

his own research suggests that "imaginary relationships with media figures can have many beneficial effects" (p.66).

Caughey discusses how media figures can affect actual behaviour or actual social interactions in other ways too. In fan clubs for instance, motivated by their mutual attraction to a celebrity, people come together and interact. Caughey describes this as the ultimate example of media figures as pseudo mutual acquaintances providing the basis for socializing (p.63). It is important to add here that some fan clubs are "official" organisations and members must pay a fee to join. These can be distinguished from clubs which develop as a result of fans spontaneously organising themselves as a group. McQuail (1994, p.290) recognises that fan clubs are sometimes encouraged by the media but that audience members can spontaneously transform themselves into social groups.

Caughey also points out that there are rules about the way in which an individual can involve him/herself with a media figure. People in his/her physical presence may become annoyed if he/she attends to them less than to media others, as a person is expected to give precedence to interaction in the "real world" over participation in the media world (p.64). He gives the examples of "football widows" or the worries of a spouse who regards media figures as rivals for her husband's attention.

Rather interestingly (and originally), Caughey writes that the figures of the media world even infiltrate the dream world - such is the significance of our media relationships. In his chapter about social relations in dreams, Caughey highlights the fact that media figures commonly feature in people's dream experiences. Celebrities appeared in 10.8%

of the sample of 222 dreams he collected (p.91). He goes on to say that the media figure only occasionally appears in their role of "celebrity" before then developing a more familiar form of relationship with the fan. It is more usual for the media figure to take on an intimate social role, such as a colleague, relative, friend, or lover (p.94). Media figures it seems also appear in dreams as antagonists or even bloodthirsty murderers! (p.98).

In conclusion, Caughey has presented much valuable material about audiences' social involvement with media figures. It is helpful that he has taken a qualitative approach to the subject. His argument that such attachments are not compensatory or pathological, but an adjunct to and a normal part of social life is an especially welcome one. He has usefully introduced a positive conceptualization of the fan into the debate. He has also distinguished between attachments based on love, admiration, and atagonism; and noted that these relationships can have beneficial aspects. However, there are perceived to be two problems in Caughey's approach with regard to this study, and these will be highlighted before moving on.

The first problem has to do with his neglect to distinguish between different types of media figures. Caughey uses the label "media figures" to cover people who appear in the media from extremely diverse areas.[3] He makes no distinction between real people (sports stars, musicians, actors, writers, comedians, presenters) and fictional characters (from film to soap opera). He gives no consideration to the fact that different types of media figures might encourage different sorts of relationships in different ways, or that some may stimulate involvement more than others. James Coffman (1979), for example, has written specifically about rock stars and their attempts to establish para-

social relationships with their audiences. He proposes that para-social interaction, as conceptualized by Horton and Wohl, is a useful concept for exploring the interaction between the rock musician and the fan.

This research project has focused exclusively on broadcasting's personalities and has examined how they actively cue social interaction with audiences - indeed it can be said that they exist primarily to perform this function - and is interested in audience responses to this category of media figure only. Following their own study which considered para-social interaction, Conway and Rubin (1991, p.460) suggest that further work is needed to attempt to discriminate between types of media personae with whom viewers feel they interact.

In comparison with research examining viewers' perceptions of and responses to media "characters", "personae" have been somewhat neglected (see Hoffner & Cantor, 1991). Even in the study by Taylor and Mullan (1986), which includes much consideration of television's hosts (see Chapter One of this thesis), when they refer to "the realm of the para-social" and to Horton and Wohl, they do so in relation to audiences' relationships with television characters (p.132). Taylor and Mullan concentrate on the genre of soap opera. They point to the fact that some viewers relate to characters as they do to friends, neighbours, and members of their own family and regard the characters as part of their life (p.120). They also talk about audience members' identification with these soap opera characters.

This thesis recognises a difference between responses to characters and to personae as Rosengren and Windahl (1972, p.182) do. They argue that para-social interaction can

be distinguished from audience relationships with performers who appear as characters mainly by the lack of identification. In the consumption of fictional genres audiences identify with the character roles, whereas the para-social relationship is characterised by interaction not identification. Here it is necessary that audiences do not lose their own identity in order that they may make the appropriate responses, reciprocal to the persona. In addition, obviously the modes of address used by presenters are not those employed by actors. In para-social interactions viewers are responding to (the illusion of) face-to-face interaction with presenters, whereas characters (performed by actors) only very rarely use direct address to the camera.

Donald Horton and Anselm Strauss (1957) distinguish between three modes of interaction found in audience-participation shows. These are personal, para-social, and vicarious (p.579). All three modes are complexly interwoven in the genre being studied, but Horton and Strauss show the character of para-social interaction by comparing it with the other two types. Para-social interaction resembles personal interaction and the simulation of conversation is central here. Vicarious interaction is understood as the process in drama, where the observer takes the roles of various actors. Therefore it is crucially different from para-social interaction because, "The vicarious participant, the spectator, is not acknowledged or addressed as a participant" (p.580). So Horton and Strauss are suggesting that para-social interaction does not occur during identification with characters and that para-social relationships develop between audiences and personae only. Therefore many studies that claim to adopt Horton and Wohl's concept of para-social interaction do so erroneously: for example, those investigating responses to soap opera reviewed earlier in this chapter.

The first problem highlighted in Caughey's work is that no attempts are made to differentiate between media figures and thus no recognition is given to the fact that different types stimulate different sorts of audience involvement: relationships with characters are based on identification, whereas those with personae are based on interaction. The second difficulty is with Caughey's conceptualization of the world of the media. As has already been briefly mentioned, his view of the "media world" as an "imaginary world" and his claims that media involvement is therefore an imaginary activity are not supported in this study. Throughout his essay Caughey insists on using the adjective "artificial" even though he argues that the "other worlds" of the media become part of our social world and that attachments to media figures can be as intense, as significant, and as "real" as those we feel for people in our primary group. The opinion held here disagrees with his insistence that such "pseudo" involvement in "pseudo" relationships and "pseudo" interactions with "pseudo" acquaintances are "artificial".

In this "real versus artificial debate" the position adopted in this study is that taken by Scannell. In reference to broadcast events, Scannell (1989) highlights the fact that there is an idea that only in conditions of presence can communication be authentic and that a "pseudo-public" life is constituted in broadcasting (p.153). He argues however that it is not the case that an event is more real and meaningful for a live audience than for viewers or listeners at home. He claims that rather than being secondary and supplementary to a public life based on presence, broadcasting has created new contexts, different realities and meanings (p.154). Indeed he states that he does not then "recognize the validity of arguments that broadcasting is a non-authentic or pseudo-public sphere" (p.156).

Similarly, and with direct regard to para-social interaction, Horton and Strauss (1957) state that:

> The social-psychological processes involved in an audience's subjective participation in the television program are not radically different from those occuring in everyday social activity, and it is not necessary to postulate special mechanisms, for example, of fantasy and dream, to understand either the behavior of the performers or the viewer's involvement in the performance. Over the course of time direct and indirect interplay between performers and audience binds them together in a common institution or, better, a common "world" of entertainment which has its own well-understood values and norms of reciprocal behavior derived from the common social matrix, its own history and course of mutual development. . . . The relationships built up, and the understandings that sustain them, seem no different in kind from those characteristic of normal social life; and the symbolic processes mediating them are likewise the same, though their operations are modified somewhat by the special conditions of broadcasting. (p.587)

Tolson (1998, p.7) too has argued that the mediation of social interaction does not compromise or dilute the potential experience on offer to the audience. Particularly in programme genres dedicated to the promotion of sociability - Tolson uses Cilla Black's *Blind Date* as his example - the audience at home is invited to share in the experience, and doing so is no less "real" for them than for the studio audience.

Clearly, then, social involvement in the world of the media is not an imaginary activity along the lines of fantasy or dream. Unlike Caughey, others have recognised that such mediated interaction is experienced as real. The media is not an artificial world: it has created its own real world and this is part of the real worlds of its audiences.

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[1]Gans (1977) analysed letters sent to a news programme and its anchorman and this included fan mail. A number of letter writers asked for autographs or requested autographed pictures (p.87). A few described aspects of their lives or wrote about their

personal problems (p.88). Gans notes that some wrote to the anchorman as to a friend (ibid.).

[2]For example, Papa et al. state that eighty-one percent felt they knew the characters as close personal friends; the same percentage reported that they became emotionally upset when certain characters faced difficult personal situations; and fifty percent reported talking back to the characters while the radio programme was being broadcast (pp.16-17).

[3]Of course it should not be forgotten that Caughey's expertise is in anthropology and American Studies, not Media Studies. In fact his interest in imaginary social relationships began with fictional literature.

Modern Communication and Culture

At the start of this thesis the theoretical framework within which this research project is situated was introduced: a framework appropriate for a study in modern communication and culture. The approach suggested by Moores (1995a, 1995b) and the theory developed by Thompson (1995) have been adopted. Their work is returned to now. Thompson's theory about the "transformation of interaction" in contemporary culture provides a way for understanding the sorts of relationships Caughey writes about, but in different, more relevant terms: not as imaginary or unreal, but "new". This idea will be elaborated later; but firstly this section will refer to some work on para-social interaction by Moores because he approaches the topic from a Media and Cultural Studies perspective.

Believing that the media's temporal and spatial organization should be a fundamental concern for researchers investigating culture and communication in the modern world, Moores (1995b) pays particular attention to the temporal and spatial dimensions of television discourse. In so doing he discusses some concrete examples of para-social interaction in recent broadcast discourse and examines the audience-oriented facework commitments of television personalities. He presents a case study of modes of direct address in two daytime magazine programmes, which were running at the time: *This Morning* and *Good Morning ... with Anne and Nick* (p.337).

Moores points out that the latter title - a conversational greeting - could itself be considered part of the para-social interaction. He continues:

> A naming of the presenters in this second title is also significant, as is the use of their forenames only. Viewers, then, are expected to be on first-name terms with the personalities who host the show. Although their names are not foregrounded in the ITV programme listings, the husband and wife team who normally present *This Morning* are known and informally addressed by guests and phone-in callers as 'Richard' and 'Judy'. (ibid.)

Clearly viewers too are expected to be on first-name terms with the presenters. It is indeed noticeable that viewers tend not to refer to the show by its official title *This Morning*, but in fact use "*Richard and Judy*" instead. This is apparent in tutorial discussions with students, for example, who will talk about an item they have seen "on *Richard and Judy*". With reference to the presenters, Moores goes on:

> Familiarity with them as media figures with unfolding biographies is acccumulated over time - through repeated consumption of the shows themselves and through their frequent past appearances in 'secondary texts' such as popular print magazines and tabloid newspapers. (ibid.)

Scannell (1988, p.21) argues that the lifetime of audience members unfolds at the same rate as the lives of characters in the fictional worlds of long-running serials and soap operas. It could be assumed, as Moores does, that this extends to the biographies of personalities in the wider broadcast world. Thus, we experience their progression through life - their relationships, marriages, break-ups, children, grandchildren, illnesses etc. - as we do that of our friends and family.

Moores highlights the significance of the fact that in both programmes the studio is designed to produce a simulation of domesticity - thus consciously orienting itself towards the environment in which it is received. The sets are decorated in the style of a family living-room where presenters and guests sit in comfortable armchairs or on sofas

by coffee-tables. Furthermore as Moores points out, "To reinforce this relaxed household atmosphere, guests are thanked for 'dropping in' or invited to 'visit again'" (p.338).

Moores proposes that in their initial greetings at the beginning of the show, the presenters establish their para-social relationship with the audience members. He gives an example from *This Morning* (9/2/94) when, following the opening sequence, Richard and Judy say, "Hi" and "Morning, hiya!" (ibid.). They talk directly to the camera/audience and, according to Moores, the casual and cheery mood is confirmed by their smiles and body posture. The points at which viewers return to the studio after a break or video insert is another crucial moment when the para-social relationship is re-established, as is the closing farewells at the end of the show. A typical parting is along the line of, "Bye, bye. See you tomorrow, bye [waves]" (ibid.).

Moores notes that the occasions on which presenters make mistakes serve to emphasize their ordinariness; thus actually enhancing their performance and their affinity with viewers. For, as Moores reminds us (with reference to Langer, 1981), "presenters like Anne Diamond and Nick Owen have achieved celebrity status not through being extra-ordinary or special but by constituting themselves as familiar, homely and down-to-earth" (p.339). Goffman (1981) also notes that mistakes make a person more human. He suggests that by apologising for a fault they have made, an announcer is "thrust . . . upon us in a more rounded and intimate way" than might have been intended (p.320). Interestingly, Taylor and Mullan (1986) talk of the "overwhelmingly sympathetic view which people hold of their favourite hosts" (p.70). They report that when specifically asked whether they would welcome a few more things going wrong on chat shows,

viewers said they would not because it would not be pleasant for the presenters - thus indicating their concern for the hosts. Taylor and Mullan point out that personalities like Wogan and Aspel are judged "by the criteria that we might apply to our own lives and those of our close friends" (p.71).

Moores also talks about the phone-ins which are an integral part of the daytime magazine programme format. Here the presenters are given the opportunity to engage in direct dialogue with callers. "In doing so", he says, "they can demonstrate their understanding of ordinary people's problems . . . it is the responsive facework of the show's hosts, whose sympathetic expressions are shot in close-up, which holds this communicative event together" (p.339). An interesting, if perhaps exceptional, example of this was seen to occur on an edition of *This Morning* (7/7/97). A young caller phoned in to talk to the programme's resident agony aunt Denise Robertson. It was his sixteenth birthday but, also the anniversary of his father's death, he was most upset and barely able to speak for crying. Robertson talked about her own son's experiences of his father's death and, in doing so and empathizing with the caller's distress, she too was moved to tears.

Phone-ins are, of course, also a characteristic of radio programmes. In their contribution to *Broadcast Talk*, Brand and Scannell (1991) describe and comment on the direct interaction between radio DJ Tony Blackburn and the listeners who phone in to his show to converse with him on the air. These listeners do so because they relate to Blackburn. Brand and Scannell comment on the fact that although a caller and Tony Blackburn have never met or spoken before, in their exchange they address each other as familiars, as if they know each other (p.219). They also note that a caller may

presume to speak on behalf of a community of listeners - as for example, "we wish you were on radio all day" (p.213). Indeed it can be said that broadcasting constructs a "pseudo-community" in which listeners (or viewers) can participate (Tolson, 1996, p.61). Members of this community are united by their knowledge of the programme.[1] Wilson (1993) says that television programmes "address their viewers as an extended group of acquaintances, if not old friends" (p.20).

Ellis (1992) writes that television's system of direct address creates a sense of complicity (p.165). He explains that direct address:

> makes explicit a relationship between viewer and broadcast TV image, designating a TV first person singular or plural ('I', 'we') and a viewing second person ('you', beautifully flexible in its lack of singular/plural difference). Together these first and second person designations can observe and speculate about third persons: 'he', 'she', 'they'. (p.139)

Thus television is able to set up what he calls "a community of address": 'I' and 'you' make up the community, 'they' are outside it (ibid.).

While the case studies of para-social interaction he has presented are most enlightening, Moores (1995b) points out that the object of his analysis is screen performance only as there is no reception ethnography to reflect on. He notes that, "Qualitative audience research into viewers' identifications with television personalities and modes of address would be a useful complement to my textual analysis. Despite the dramatic growth of media reception studies over the past decade, this remains a relatively unexplored area" (p.342). Audience members' interactions and relationships with a media personality is the area of exploration in Chapter Five.

Moores seems to appreciate the importance of stressing that integrating para-social interactions and encounters with media figures into the routines of everyday life is certainly not uncommon and that the para-social relationships viewers experience as a result should not be regarded as pathological. He states, "To assume that it is only the lonely, duped or undiscriminating consumer who identifies with presenters in this fashion would clearly be quite wrong" (p.335), and he goes on to say that following the death of the BBC Radio 4 broadcaster Brian Redhead hundreds of listeners wrote letters expressing their deep sense of loss. As a presenter on the station's news programme, *Today*, he had become a familiar and dependable part of their morning routine and they mourned his absence.

Taylor and Mullan (1986) report that when members of a Radio Four discussion group were asked to name their top radio personalities, familiar breakfast presenters were selected without hesitation: Brian Redhead (*Today*), John Timpson (*Today*), Sue MacGregor (*Today*), and Libby Purves (*Mid-Week*). According to the authors, "In each case, listeners felt they had a strong idea about what the person was really like when listening to him or her talk. They were like old and close friends" (p.115). They include the following quotation from one member of the group:

> ANNE (37): Funnily enough I would like to meet Brian Redhead. I've never forgotten two summers ago his boy got killed in a motor accident in France, eighteen years old, and he wasn't on the radio that morning and they gave it out, and that's never gone out of my mind. I always think of that, I always wonder how he could get over it and still be sort of happy. (ibid.)

When Redhead himself died, listeners' grief was, in light of the citations above, understandably considerable. The same situation followed the death of Geoff Hamilton

who presented *Gardeners' World* on television for seventeen years. In a tribute article to the BBC gardener and *Radio Times* columnist headlined, "Every gardener's best friend" (1996, August 17-23), it is reported that following his death, the office of the production company behind *Gardeners' World* was inundated with phone calls and faxes. These included a call from an 85-year-old man in tears. Another caller was planning to plant a big shrub in her garden and give cuttings to all her friends in memory of Hamilton, believing this is how he would have liked to be remembered. As his colleague and producer Gay Search explains, "For a lot of viewers, Geoff wasn't just a TV presenter, he was a friend" (ibid.).

The *Radio Times* also claimed that its mailbag had been overflowing with readers' tributes to Geoff Hamilton and printed excerpts from a selection of these in their letters' page. These included the following sentiments:

> The death of Geoff Hamilton will leave a huge gap in the lives of gardeners everywhere. . . . We shall miss him - very, very much. . . . I cannot imagine doing anything in the garden without first thinking what Geoff would advise. We feel we have lost a dear friend. . . . My garden is perfectly still, weeping, mourning, grieving for our loss of Geoff Hamilton. . . . He will live on in our hearts and our gardens. ("Letters(b)," 1996, August 24-30)

Obviously the death of Jill Dando is a prime example here, and will be referred to in detail in the conclusion of this thesis.

In a similar vein, again as reflected in their letters to *Radio Times*, on his return to BBC1 after a long absence presenter Michael Parkinson was greeted warmly by viewers. Viewer Pip Hayward from the Isle of Wight wrote the following:

> . . . Last night I saw an old friend I hadn't seen for quite a few years. As sometimes happens, things seemed a little awkward at first, but it wasn't long before it was as if I'd only seen him last week. He was just as relaxed, just as entertaining, just as much fun as he always was. It's great to think it won't be another 15 years before Michael Parkinson will be sharing his guests with us again. ("Letters(c)," 1998, January 31-February 6)

Another reader enthusiatically declared, "Welcome back, Parky, we have missed you" (ibid.).[2]

Like Moores, Meyrowitz (1985) agrees that the para-social is a "normal" part of everyday life. He says, "Even among 'average' people, the para-social relationship takes its place among daily live interactions with friends, family and associates. Indeed, 'real' friends often discuss the antics of their para-social friends" (p.120). Meyrowitz introduces the term "media friends" to encapsulate viewers' experiences of para-social relationships. Like social relationships, para-social relationships develop over time, and he believes that Horton and Wohl's theory explains the grief felt when a well-loved media figure dies or is killed. On such an occasion "millions of people may experience a sense of loss as great as (and sometimes greater than) the feelings of loss accompanying the death of a relative or friend" (ibid.). He explains that the death of John Lennon was painful for him and for his colleagues because they had "known" him and grown up "with" him. Furthermore, he points out that, regarding Lennon's murderer as a "complete stranger" (because they had never physically met), the investigators "overlooked the powerful para-social ties between them" (p.121). Meyrowitz believes that although Mark David Chapman may never have met Lennon, he definitely knew him very well. He suggests that this is a new form of murder - the para-social murder - which should be added to the two existing categories used by police (those committed by a person who knows the victim and those committed by a stranger).

Meyrowitz's argument that the media have developed new patterns of familiarity and estrangement comes from a perspective which recognises that modern social life has increasingly involved mediated culture and which has as its central theme the consequences for social experience and identity of living in the "electronic age". Crucially he recognises that social space has become separated from physical place and Meyrowitz describes the media as revolutionary in its reshaping of social situations and social identities. But specifically he asks, "What sort of relationship is formed between people who experience each other only through electronic media?" (p.119). His answer is "a new form of interaction", namely para-social interaction, and he stresses that no longer is intimacy achieved only through face-to-face interaction. He does acknowledge that para-social relationships are enhanced when media content resembles interpersonal communication.

Graham Murdock (1993) takes a similar approach in a paper which "aims to show that the constitution of modernity is inextricably bound up with the development of modern communication systems" (p.525), and like Moores he refers to Giddens and to his theory of time-space distanciation. He too states that under conditions of modernity a wide range of social relations can be sustained without co-presence and he considers the relations between communications and sociability. Murdock also proposes that the new media help to reconfigure networks of social relations and that these new forms of social relations combine intimacy and distance. He states, "modern media produce new forms of para-social interaction, in which people enjoy intimate relations with people they may never meet or talk to in person" (p.534). He explains that the production of new forms of sociability is linked to the ways that communications systems help to reconstitute space/time relations.

Ultimately, this line of argument leads to a re-evaluation of the concept of mass communication. In a review essay, Beniger (1987) also writes about communication technology's role in the development of modern society, though his interest is the changed basis of societal control. He looks in particular at the personalization of mass media. He refers to the long history of efforts to personalize mass communications and the continued blurring of the distinction between interpersonal and mass communication. Although he focuses on computer technology's capacity for simulating interpersonal communication and on its use to influence behaviour or opinion, he does consider broadcasting. Such is the convergence or confusion of interpersonal and mass communication that Beniger suggests abandoning attempts to distinguish different types of communication on the basis of purely objective criteria when, "contrary to the traditional enumeration of mass media", for example, messages broadcast by personalities "might approximate interpersonal effects" (p.363). He believes that instead far better "would be simply to reformulate the interpersonal-mass distinction in terms of the subjective effects communication has on receivers and the causes of these effects" (ibid.). He redefines interpersonal and mass communication as follows:

> Thus, all communication received *as if* it were direct, personal, and sincere (the ideal type) I would call *interpersonal* as, for example, a televised presidential address to the nation might seem in time of grave international crisis. Similarly, all communication received *as if* it were indirect, impersonal, selfishly motivated, and likely insincere I would call *mass* as, for example, the same presidential speech would become if seen as an attempt to help gain reelection. (ibid.)

Of course according to such definitions, what is interpersonal communication for some members of an audience will be mass for others. The same televised message is both interpersonal and mass, depending on the subjective state of each receiver. Beniger

states that the term "para-social interaction" was introduced by Horton and Wohl for precisely this phenomenon whereby mass media effects are seen as equivalent to those of interpersonal communication (p.364). Furthermore, Beniger claims that the rapid growth of what he calls "pseudo-community" can, in part, be attributed to "conscientious efforts by mass communicators to approximate interpersonal effects" (p.366). His argument about pseudo-community is that:

> the development of countless technologies with which to personalize mass communication has brought forth a new infrastructure for major societal change, a reversal of a centuries-old trend from organic community - based on interpersonal relationships - to impersonal association integrated by mass means. Increasingly we will experience the superficially personal relationships of pseudo-community, a hybrid of interpersonal and mass communication . . . (p.369)

Like Beniger, Gumpert and Cathcart (1986) are interested in the "nexus" of media and interpersonal communication. They claim that not only are both connected, they are symbiotic, and their book is about this inextricable relationship (p.9). They too argue that technology has modified our relationships because physical space and time between ourselves and others have become irrelevant. They explain that the media have made it necessary for us to reconsider the traditional notion that interpersonal intimacy entails physical closeness. The media have led to the development of unique relationships involving an intimacy that requires no face-to-face contact: in other words, a nonphysical intimacy (p.166). This is a topic which Thompson (1995) has elaborated in depth.

In the Introduction, Thompson's approach to the media and modernity was outlined. It was explained that he distinguishes between three forms of interaction: face-to-face,

mediated, and mediated quasi-interaction. The latter refers to the mass media, which are of great significance for the mediation of experience in modern society. In his book, Thompson goes on to focus on mediated quasi-interaction and to examine its features in more detail. He concentrates on television and considers its organisation. Of particular relevance here is his look at the nature of the social relationship established through mediated quasi-interaction (p.98). He explains that the persons recipients come to know through television are 'personalities' or 'personae', and that their distinctive feature is that they combine audio-visual presence with spatial-temporal distance (ibid.): in other words, they are present to the recipients while absent from the context of reception.

Thompson claims that the relationship established through such a combination of presence and absence is quite different from the kinds of relationship formed in face-to-face interaction because, constructed at a distance, the personalities' traits cannot be altered through dialogical exchange. Hence, he says, TV personalities can "acquire an 'aura' which is sustained in part by the distance that separates personalities from viewers" (p.99). This thesis has been arguing that broadcasting's personality system works to reduce this aura. Nevertheless, Thompson characterises the "exceptional circumstances" in which the distance between personalities and viewers is bridged as "odd and somewhat awkward" encounters (ibid.), and the research presented in the next chapter confirms this.

Later in his book Thompson returns to the nature of the social relationship established between producers and recipients, and explores the distinctive bonds of intimacy that may be formed through mediated quasi-interaction. He says that a new kind of intimacy has been produced by the development of the media. While face-to-face interaction

gives rise to relations which involve intimacy of an essentially reciprocal character, and intimate relationships of a reciprocal nature may also be established and sustained through mediated forms of communication, Thompson argues that:

> By contrast, in the case of mediated quasi-interaction, individuals can create and establish a form of intimacy which is essentially non-reciprocal. It is this new form of mediated, non-reciprocal intimacy, stretched across time and space, which underlies, for example, the relationship between fan and star. (p.208)

He elaborates this further in a section entitled, "Non-reciprocal Intimacy at a Distance" (p.219). He claims there are two aspects of mediated quasi-interaction which are of particular importance for the nature of the personal relationships that can be formed through the media. Firstly, stretched across time and space, mediated quasi-interaction makes possible 'intimacy at a distance'. Secondly, as it is non-dialogical, the form of intimacy established through mediated quasi-interaction is non-reciprocal: that is, he says, it does not involve the kind of reciprocity and mutuality characteristic of face-to-face interaction (ibid.). He goes on to talk about both the attractions and the costs that non-reciprocal intimacy at a distance has for individuals. For example, unconstrained by reality, it provides companionship without demands, the opportunity to explore relations without commitment, and allows scope to shape the relationship as desired (p.220).

In one form or another, he notes, most individuals in modern societies engage in non-reciprocal relations of intimacy with distant others. Media figures become familiar; they are regularly discussed, thought of as associates or even friends, and referred to on a first-name basis. But Thompson highlights the fact that in some cases these relationships can assume great significance in an individual's life - to the extent that they

overshadow or redefine other aspects of that person's life. He gives the example of a Barry Manilow fan whose one-sided love affair with the singer has become such an integral part of her life that she cannot exclude it from her daily living (p.221).

This leads Thompson into a discussion about fans. The account he develops is a useful one because, having rejected the stereotypically negative images conjured up by the term itself, he regards being a fan as an "altogether ordinary and routine aspect of everyday life" (p.222). In Thompson's conception:

> To be a fan is to organize one's daily life in such a way that following a certain activity (like a spectator sport), or cultivating a relation to particular media products or genres, becomes a central preoccupation of the self and serves to govern a significant part of one's activity and interaction with others. Being a fan is one way of reflexively organizing the self and its day-to-day conduct. (ibid.)

A helpful outcome of viewing fandom in this way is that there is no clear-cut dividing line between a fan and a non-fan or between fans themselves.[3] Rather, "It is only a matter of degree - of the degree to which an individual orients himself or herself towards certain activities, products or genres and begins to refashion his or her life accordingly" (ibid.).

Of course - as previously discussed in the Introduction to this thesis - there are many forms of fandom, but Thompson stresses that often being a fan is rooted in the intensive cultivation of non-reciprocal relations of intimacy with distant others. He states:

> For individuals who have established a non-reciprocal relation of intimacy with a distant other, becoming a fan is a way of extending and consolidating this

> relationship; it is a way of enacting a relationship which cannot normally be enacted in reciprocal contexts of face-to-face interaction. (p.223)

And therefore he believes that, "By providing individuals with the means of enacting a relationship or forming a bond, becoming a fan has a great deal to offer" (p.224).

It is this relationship which gives meaning and purpose to the associated fan activities (p.222). As Thompson points out, fans typically engage in many activities, which include collecting relevant media products, building up collections of memorabilia or scrapbooks, and going to concerts and shows. An important attraction of fandom highlighted by Thompson is that it offers the opportunity to develop a network of social relations with other fans and to possibly become part of a group or a community: fans may join a fan club, attend fan conventions, or make contact and communicate with fellow fans in various other ways.[4] Indeed he notes that fandom is often a complex and highly structured social world (p.223). He points here to the work of Jenkins (1992) who, having studied fans of science fiction, has written about the social dimension of fandom in detail. Thompson states that the fan community has a number of distinctive features, especially in the fact that it is not restricted to a particular place: fans may come together on occasion, but their association is independent of a common locale. Thompson explains that therefore forms of mediated communication are central to the development of the fan community. Fan relations are sustained through letters, newsletters, telephone, e-mail, Internet etc. (p.224).

Being a fan is commonly regarded as an unworthy pursuit and, as such, it is a stigmatized activity which may give rise to feelings of guilt and self-doubt. Thompson believes that this fact can partly explain the deep involvement fans may feel with their

community. But he also claims that because being a fan is an integral part of the process of self-formation, as individuals have wrapped up a significant part of their identity in fandom, the act of associating with other fans can be immensely gratifying (ibid.). He explains that fans are associating with others whose chosen life trajectory overlaps significantly with their own and this is something to be shared.

In the chapter in which he considers fandom, Thompson is writing about self and experience in a mediated world (p.207). He discusses how individuals construct coherent identities for themselves, emphasizing that in modern societies the media offer individuals many more sources from which to draw on in this process of self-formation. He explains that this "non-local knowledge" is selectively assimilated and appropriated by individuals in ways significant to them. In his account Thompson views the self as a "symbolic project that the individual actively constructs" (p.210). As Moores (1997, p.239) notes, this notion is borrowed from Giddens' social theory where self-identity is understood as being about maintaining an ongoing story or narrative of the self.

Thompson explains that drawing on the symbolic materials available (which are, of course, unevenly distributed and access to them may be restricted for some), an individual produces an account of who they are; they put together a narrative of self-identity. This autobiographical narrative changes over time and identity is redefined. Clearly, as Thompson argues, the development of communication media has had a profound impact on the process of self-formation (p.211). Crucially, it has expanded the range of symbolic materials available as individuals are no longer limited to acquiring these solely from contexts of face-to-face interaction. Symbolic materials employed for the purposes of self-formation have been increasingly drawn from sources

accessed through mediated forms of communication which have opened up new forms of knowledge. Thompson describes the media as enriching the reflexive organisation of the self because:

> as individuals gain access to mediated forms of communication, they are able to draw on an expanding range of symbolic resources for the purposes of constructing the self. Like symbolic materials exchanged through face-to-face interaction, mediated materials can be incorporated into the process of self-formation; increasingly the self becomes organised as a reflexive project through which the individual incorporates mediated materials (among others) into a coherent and continuously revised biographical narrative. (p.212)

The constant revision of an individual's narrative is accentuated too because the media, with its profusion of material, is ever presenting new possibilities and expanding resources. [Thompson does go on to also consider several respects in which the growing role of the media can have negative consequences for self-formation (p.213). And it is also worth mentioning that while mediated symbolic materials may be a rich and varied resource for the process of self-formation, individuals do still rely to a great extent on the materials exchanged through the face-to-face encounters of everyday life (p.218).]

For most people, it is noted, being a fan is but one aspect of the life-project they have built for themselves (p.224). But Thompson claims that for some individuals the experience of being a fan can become a kind of addiction - that is, he says, "a form of activity which becomes compulsive and from which the individual cannot extricate himself or herself at will" (p.225). This happens when the individual becomes so preoccupied with their fan relationship that, he explains, "the self becomes increasingly absorbed in the world of the fan," until, "the project of the self becomes inseparable

from, and increasingly shaped by, the experience of being a fan" (ibid.). Being a fan may then become an activity that one cannot do without. In this case the narrative of the self has become so interwoven with the experience of fandom that they can no longer be prised apart. Obviously this situation is the extreme.

In conclusion Thompson reminds us that although mediated experience may acquire a deep and enduring relevance, the extent to which it is incorporated reflexively into the project of the self varies greatly (p.230). He says that for some individuals the project of the self is shaped overwhelmingly by lived experience and mediated experiences have little bearing. For others - like the dedicated fan - mediated experience becomes central to the project of the self and this person organises their life so that mediated experience is a regular and integral feature of it. But according to Thompson:

> For most individuals, the relevance structure of different forms of experience lies somewhere between these two poles. As they move through the time-space paths of their day-to-day lives they acquire both lived experience and mediated experience, incorporating them into a continuously evolving life-project. (p.230)

Thompson reiterates that we are living in a world in which mediated experience has become pervasive and, as such, plays a substantial and expanding role in the daily lives of individuals. While lived experience remains fundamental, it is increasingly supplemented by mediated experience (p.233).

Conclusion

This chapter has explained that technology has extended our social experience and modified our relationships because the space and time between ourselves and others have become less relevant. The mass media have developed new forms of familiarity, intimacy, and sociability, which are not dependent on face-to-face interaction. Broadcasting invites viewers and listeners to participate in para-social interaction with personality presenters. It does so by presenting much of its content as interpersonal communication. Research has shown that audience members do develop para-social relationships with personae, responding to these media figures as they do people in their primary group. It has been argued that this is a normal response and a common experience. One form of fandom is rooted in such relationships. It has been suggested that, in this case, fandom is a way of consolidating the bond and enacting the relationship between audience member and persona.

The next chapter provides concrete illustration of much of Thompson's theory of fandom. The fans studied in this research project have cultivated a relationship with a media personality. Initiated by non-reciprocal intimacy at a distance, their relationships now operate on the levels of both mediated quasi-interaction and face-to-face interaction (with neither taking precedence). These fans have also established themselves as social group. This valued network of friends based on shared experience is largely mediated: the relationships between fans are sustained through mediated interaction (letters, e-mails, phone calls), with occasional face-to-face interaction.

[1]In a recent paper, Tolson (1998) writes about inclusive, communal modes of address. He shows how the breakfast news magazine programme *GMTV* "constructs a mode of address to its audience which incorporates a principle of 'communality'" (p.1). He later notes it is apparent that broadcasters can speak on behalf of their audience in the articulation of an inclusive "we", which refers to everyone in the mediated community.

[2]Likewise, when Barry Norman announced he was leaving the BBC after 26 years, *Radio Times* editor, Sue Robinson, tells readers that tributes poured in to the magazine and to the offices of *Film 98* ("Letters(d)," 1998, August 8-14). So many viewers were going to miss him so much, that Norman himself says he found the mass of letters from those regretting his departure overwhelming, and he was moved by such a response (ibid.).

[3]Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) usefully distinguish between fans, cultists (or subcultists), and enthusiasts (p.138). They both explore the similarities and summarize the differences between these three categories. They believe that what much of the recent literature has called a fan is, in fact, closer to the person they define a cultist (or subcultist). For instance cultists, they say, "are linked through network relations which may take a number of forms, but which are essentially characterized by informality" (p.139). In this respect cultists are more organised than fans, but less so than enthusiasts. Abercrombie and Longhurst go on to eludicate a continuum in which the consumer is positioned at one end, followed by the fan, then the cultist, then the enthusiast, to the petty producer at the other end (p.141). They propose that, in general, levels of skill (technical, analytical, and interpretative) increase across the continuum (p.143).

They also refer to the work of Tulloch and Jenkins (1995) in support of their argument about an audience continuum. In their consideration of viewers of *Doctor Who* and *Star Trek*, Tulloch and Jenkins make a distinction between "fans" and "followers", although they stress that the boundary between the two groups is fluid and somewhat arbitrary. Abercrombie and Longhurst suggest that those they have categorized as consumers are "follower-like" (p.141).

See the Introduction to this thesis for a discussion of work on fandom.

[4]In her introduction to the book *Theorizing Fandom: Fans, Subculture and Identity*, Harris (1998a) notes that, "Virtually all researchers find the social or shared aspect of fandom a critical consideration" (p.5).

CHAPTER FIVE

CASE STUDY: PHILLIP SCHOFIELD FANS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from this study's empirical research. Having considered the media persona Phillip Schofield in Chapter Three, here the fan experience is investigated. The research involved conducting in-depth interviews with four of Schofield's fans: referred to below as Abby, Lindsay, Rya, and Samantha. When the interviews took place in 1998, Abby was 25 years old, living with her parents in Essex, and working as a sales assistant in a shop. Lindsay was 24 years old and living away from her family's home in Kent while studying at university. Aged 26, Rya was sharing a flat in Glasgow with her sister and, a graduate, was working for a computer company that designs and updates Internet sites. Samantha was 28 years old, house-sharing in London, and working as a secretary for the BBC.

These fans were asked about their responses to Schofield and their relationship with him, their fan career, and their being part of a fan community. Two subjects chose to be interviewed together, whilst the others preferred that their interviews be carried out separately. These interviews produced almost eleven hours of recorded material. Though the relationship each of these individuals has with Schofield is unique, and their experiences of fandom are different, they do nonetheless have much in common. These fans are unrepresentative of ordinary audience members because they have reached the stage where their relationship with Schofield is no longer purely one-way: he knows them. Nevertheless, their relationship was initiated by non-reciprocal intimacy at a distance.

The interviews followed many conversations and a number of discussions with these fans, and with other members of the social group they are part of, during time spent with them. The fact that I am a fan of Schofield myself has already been noted and I will refer to my own experience as appropriate throughout this chapter. Furthermore, I have also been involved with this fan community for a number of years. Over the course of the research for this thesis, I attended three of the main gatherings the fan community had during this period (19, 20, & 21 April 1996; 7, 8, & 9 June 1996; and 5 & 6 July 1997).

This chapter begins by tracing the formation of the fan community and briefly looking at the social dimension of fandom. It then concentrates on the relationship each of the interviewees has formed with Schofield. Their responses to Schofield as a television presenter are considered here, with particular focus on what it was about him that appealed to them. The subjects' views on Schofield as a professional personality are also explored. This chapter then proceeds to look at the development of the interviewees' fandom. Of particular interest here is what turns a para-social relationship into a fan relationship; or what marks the difference between a fan and a non-fan (the ordinary member of the audience who takes their para-social relationship no further than that).

The Social Fan

Phillip Schofield has never had an official fan club. His fans have however spontaneously formed themselves into a social group. Members of this all female group

come from throughout the UK - one fan lives in the USA. Most, having become fans in their early/mid teens, are now aged in their mid/late twenties.

When each of the individuals interviewed first became a fan, no-one else they knew shared their fandom. They wanted to go to see Schofield - this would be outside BBC Television Centre, Radio 1, or at personal appearances he was making throughout the country - and the norm was to take along a friend or a family member even though that person was not a fan.[1] However, going to see Schofield like this resulted in encounters with other fans. There would usually be a crowd standing around waiting, and those who went regularly soon became familiar. Fans would get talking, swapping addresses to keep in contact, and eventually becoming friends. At the end of the 1980s, there was a core of six fans who would always be at Radio 1 on Thursday evenings. Schofield started calling them "the team" and it was then that they began thinking of themselves as a group. When the team grew in size, they were renamed "the gang".

In the summer of 1990, "the team" went to Schofield's week of Radio 1 roadshows as a group. This involved travelling between five venues on the south-west coast of England and staying over at each location together (and also wearing pink team T-shirts). Their number increased throughout the week as they met other Schofield fans who were touring too and these fans joined them. After the roadshow tour, the new recruits would come to Radio 1 to meet up again with the team, which was fast becoming the gang. Rya was one of those recruited at a roadshow. As she explains, meeting fellow fans and exchanging addresses, individuals became part of a social network. A fan was regarded as having joined the gang when it was assumed that they would be included in arrangements or collective plans for group events (as described below). Rya had

previously been active in her search for contact with fellow fans. She first got in touch with others by putting an advert in a TV guide magazine looking for a pen-pal who liked Schofield and she had quite a few replies.

So the original team of six people - which included Abby and Samantha - grew into a group, gaining fans from the roadshows, from outside Radio 1, and outside TV Centre. Various members of the gang - at least ten in number - would meet each week, but every so often they would all make an effort to meet up on the same week. The first formally organised mass gathering was in October 1991 when Samantha sent invitations to everyone suggesting they come down to Radio 1 on a specific weekend. The majority of fans came, including one from Newcastle, one from Glasgow, and two from Manchester. 28 fans met outside Radio 1 and then went for a meal. Some people came just for the day, others stayed over with the fans who lived in London.

The next big gathering was a weekend long event (which involved fans staying in a hotel) and was on the occasion of Schofield's opening night in *Joseph* in January 1992. A similar event was organised for his last night at The London Palladium. Following this, when it went on tour round the UK and Ireland, there were regular group trips to see the show and get-togethers for opening and closing nights. This meant fans staying at each of the various locations and the gang would take over small hotels with, for instance, four people staying in five family rooms. In Dublin, Samantha booked everyone's theatre tickets so that they could fill the entire front row on the show's last night there. Most of the gang spent a week in Dublin.

However the gatherings have not been exclusively organised around seeing Schofield. There has been an annual picnic in Regent's Park (near Radio 1) since 1988. These are organised by Samantha who sends out invitations. May 1992 saw the largest crowd of picnickers, with over fifty people there. By this stage the gang had been joined by fans they had met at *Joseph*: when queuing for tickets at the Box Office or waiting for Schofield at the stage door. Lindsay was recruited this way at The London Palladium. The group have also had a number of New Year gatherings: several in London, one in Blackpool (where they had their own block of apartments), and another in Edinburgh.

Clearly there is a lot of work involved in making all the arrangements for occasions like these and, as the main organisers, Samantha and Abby could be regarded as leading the gang. They have been largely responsible for founding and for sustaining the group. In-between face-to-face meetings, contact is now predominantly maintained through e-mail. In addition to individuals sending each other messages, the fans have all subscribed to a mailing list. This means an individual can send an e-mail message to everyone on the list simultaneously: a system used to keep up-to-date with news about Schofield. Fans can also currently "chat" on the guestbook at the *Doctor Dolittle* website (www.geocities.com/Broadway/Balcony/1389), which was set up by a Schofield fan. Schofield has himself left messages there.

Recently the number of fans attending gatherings has been steadily decreasing. The depleted membership of the gang is largely attributed to the fact that some people feel they have to "move on" because being "grown up" is not seen as being compatible with being a fan of Schofield. Fans explain there is pressure "to grow out of it". Members

have also been lost to marriage and children, or work commitments have meant a change of priorities.

However social contact with fellow fans remains important for the fans interviewed. Abby, Samantha, and Lindsay all believe that they would still be fans without it, but not to the same extent, and insist that they would miss the shared group experience. Rya claims she would not still be an active fan of Schofield without her Schofield friends. She explains that in the past when she has thought about ending her fandom, she has decided against it because of the friendships she has made.[2] For Rya, a large part of going to see *Joseph* was seeing the friends she had made through Schofield. Furthermore, she says, going to see Schofield in a television or theatre show is a sociable event for her, an occasion to enjoy with friends, and she would not do it alone.

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[1]It should be remembered that in the early days of Schofield's career, most fans were too young to travel to see him independently.

[2]Harris (1998a) notes that an individual's involvement in a fan community can become more important to them than the object of fandom itself (p.6).

Forming a Relationship with a Television Presenter

The interviews began by considering what is was about Schofield, as a television presenter, that his viewers liked. Based on previous conversations with fans, it seemed that Schofield's conversational and informal approach first appealed to everyone. The individuals interviewed were asked whether it would be correct to say that whenever they started watching Schofield on Children's BBC and found they liked him, they were responding to his presentation style.

Samantha and Abby agreed with this suggestion. They added that they liked his personality and his charisma, and that these came across in the way he presented. Lindsay and Rya both picked up on the use of the term "presentation style", and whilst agreeing that they responded to this favourably, they made the point that Schofield's was not a deliberate performance; rather he was regarded as being natural.

> Lindsay: I wouldn't say it's a style as such, it's just, it just comes across, I mean, that's how it comes across, it could have been a conscious thing, but I doubt it. But it's just him. It came across as ok I'm here, that's the camera, I'm talking to it, and there doesn't seem to be any . . . just generally being so relaxed, and going ok we're here let's have a chat and here's a few programmes and, you know, we'll have a bit of a lark in-between. . . . You think presentation style, especially with children's television if you think presentation style, either from one extreme to another like Timmy Mallett, that was very much . . . an obvious style of presenting. And then you've got very often the *Blue Peter* style of presenting. So it wouldn't come across as a style, it was just doing it.

Having made a similar point about Schofield's undeliberate style, Rya continued:

> I just remember him doing daft things with Gordon and singing along to things and saying about, I mean he might have said, oh yeah I watched this on telly last night and you have to see this, in the same way I would have gone, oh I was

> reading this paper this morning, look at this look at this. He did the same kind of thing that I would do with my friends. But he had the thing where he was on tv so he just did it on tv as opposed to doing it in the classroom or whatever. So he would put on a clip of this programme he was watching last night and then, or he would sing along to this thing and go hey it was great, he was just very relaxed and at home on tv.

It can be said, therefore, that a key to Schofield's appeal was his behaving with his audience as one would do with a group of friends. Furthermore, his audience could pick up things about him as a person from what he said and did on television.

The interviewees were asked whether the fact that Schofield was on television regularly helped him become familiar. Based on what has been written in Part One of the thesis, it was expected that regular appearances would be an important element in establishing a relationship between presenter and viewer, because familiarity is thought to be crucial to liking and getting to know someone. The answers given were therefore surprising.

Samantha and Abby suggested that Schofield's regular appearances made him familar to everybody else and, turning him into a household name, contributed to his becoming famous. However in their own experience, his appearing regularly was much less significant to their liking him than his personality and the fact that they thought he was good at what he did.

In response to the question, Lindsay agreed that appearing frequently helped Schofield become a familiar figure. However she describes this sort of familiarity as knowing what to expect from the person, not "knowing" the person. Like Lindsay, Rya distinguished between familiar as in "familiar face" and familiar as in "knowing him better". She explains that Schofield became a familiar face because she was tuning in

every day and that soon she knew what he was like on tv. Yet she stresses that does not mean she knew the person.

> Rya: You know what he does and how he will react to things, in a tv way. In the same way as, em, I, if someone gave me a script for *Going Live* I could say it the exact same way he would say it, and I, you know, without him having read it, you know, you know how he's going to.

She explains that she used to write requests to his radio show in a way that she knew would work with the way she knew he would read them. She describes this as a "technical knowledge" of him. Rya elaborated her point that knowing what Schofield is like on television is not the same as knowing what he is like in real life:

> I mean he could be completely hung over, completely shitty mood, but as soon as the microphone turns on and the cameras turn on he's not going to let you see it, and he's going to, so in that way he's, he is being a tv presenter or a radio presenter and he is not being himself, you know because, I mean, which is fair enough, you don't want to see someone hung over or in a pisser of a mood or whatever, so I always, that's something that I've always thought of when I'm watching telly, you just think ehhh, and sometimes when you watch someone a lot and you kind of do see them and you think, ah he looks a bit tired and you kind of see a little bit behind the veneer, but make-up does a lot of good, you know, you never know exactly.

She continued:

> So, I think I'm a bit cynical of personas on tv, I never completely trust them, and em, I think, I mean the thing about Phillip was that he did seem very very natural and just was having a laugh, totally unscripted and talked about and did things that I just found to be really entertaining, and kind of, you know, when someone has a similiar sense of humour to you, you kind of latch on to that and you kind of think, you know, I like this person.

She does think that Schofield's sense of humour is real, believing this is not something that could be faked.

Drawing on my own experience, I next suggested that seeing Schofield regularly on television resulted in the viewer feeling involved with him somehow. However the individuals interviewed did not agree that for them "involvement" was a suitable word to use: although some were less adamant about this by the end of the interview, having thought through their relationship with Schofield more thoroughly.

Abby explains she did not *feel involved* with or closer to Schofield through his shows because he was just being a presenter. Although she acknowledges that a lot of fans would have said they felt involved, about herself she says:

> I didn't, I wouldn't say I felt involved with him by watching him on the telly, no. I think that the only reason I wanted to watch him and carry on watching him is because of the way I liked, you know, the way he did things.

Samantha did make the point that it was at this stage they *got involved* in collecting articles and material about him. She said, "cause you was watching him on the telly and stuff like that and you decided that you wanted to collect articles, and was dead set on meeting him." Having established that Samantha and Abby did not feel an "involvement", how they did feel was pursued further.

> Catherine: There must be something different though between all of us and all of the other people who watched Children's BBC, and didn't, maybe thought oh yeah Phillip's ok and that, it was no more than that.
>
> Abby: Whereas we wanted to take it one stage further.

> Catherine: So why was that? Just because we all thought he seemed really nice and liked the way he presented?
>
> Abby: Yeah, I think so. I remember when he was on and I, you know, used to think oh excellent, and I thought I really want to meet him you know, I want to find out if he's like that in real life, like if he's as bubbly as that, if he's as fun as that, cause he comes across like that and I think if I had met him and he wasn't, then I wouldn't still be following him, so I think yeah, I think that's probably why it was, you know, you just thought he was a nice guy and you wanted to find out whether he was or not, you know, you wanted to meet that person.

Therefore in Samantha and Abby's case, their para-social relationship with Schofield basically consisted of them seeing him on television, responding to his presentation style and personality, and then wanting to meet him. His seeming familiar or their feeling involved were not necessary factors in their relationship with him.

Lindsay believes that any involvement is quite superficial in the beginning, but that it does change as the years go on to become much closer. She talked instead about the "connection" between Schofield and his viewers. She explained that Schofield found a common ground with his audience in the subjects he talked about; he shared their interests and this enhanced the connection. When it was suggested that there are some presenters you just don't feel involved with, again she talked about connecting.

> Just picking someone off the top of my head, Chris Evans. You always feel with him it's kind of, ok watch me, I'm here to entertain you, I'm the star, I'm the ego, em, so I personally find that hard to connect with. . . . But with Phillip it was more, ok here I am, this is what you get, this is what I think, you know, what do you think.

About feeling involved, Rya said:

> I was - in the way that Phillip was a part of my life because I would watch on tv on a Friday, I would watch on a Saturday, I wouldn't leave my house until like quarter past twelve on a Saturday or whatever, that, I'm involved in that way.

However, she describes the situation as "a one-way street", meaning that there is involvement on her part only and none the other way. She explains that because she regards "involvement" as being between two people, she did not consider herself to be involved with Schofield. She would call what she had a "strong interest" instead, as this can be one way. Any involvement she feels she had was her participation in the programmes.

The next question each of the interviewees was asked was whether they feel they "got to know" Schofield through his shows. Again, having expected that the belief one knows a personality is central to having a para-social relationship with them, these answers were somewhat unexpected.

> Samantha: You get to know more *about* him, but I don't . . .
>
> Abby: I wouldn't say you get to know him. I mean you get to know the facts about him, like you get to know what he's doing or whatever or he'll mention something, he'll you know just off the top of his head while he's talking, but I wouldn't have thought that makes you know him just because you know something.
>
> Samantha: But some people could think that they did know him through that, because what you see is what you get.
>
> Abby: Yeah.
>
> Samantha: And he's very similar to meet, I mean we know that now but we didn't know that then.
>
> Abby: We didn't know that then and we wanted to find that out then. I mean through CBBC obviously he was very chatty and bubbly and stuff and that's what I wanted to find out, I wanted to find out if he was like that, so in that

> respect yeah you got to see him and him be very em, as he is but I wouldn't say you got to know him like that.

Discussing this further, with reference to stories told to them by other fans, and in relation to their experience of "knowing" other personalities, Samantha and Abby end up concluding that you can "sort of" get to know someone through their shows. For instance Samantha notes, "If you were watching him every day, then one day he come on, you would know him well enough to know he is not in a happy mood and things like that."

However when Samantha and Abby think about knowing Schofield, it is from meeting him in person. These viewers have all met Schofield many times. Having seen him "in real life", they are in the privileged position of being able to judge whether the Schofield they see on television is the same as the Schofield they see in the flesh (the melodramatic philosophy of the person). This is, of course, problematical because what they see "in the flesh" is not necessarily the "real" Schofield either. However this is not a matter they seem to have taken into account.

Asked whether she got to know Schofield through his shows, Lindsay replied:

> Part of him, yeah. I don't think . . . that what you see on tv is very different from him. I mean it's a smaller version, maybe, so you get to know part of him. So I felt yeah, in some ways yes I did feel I got to know him, because you pick up on his sense of humour, what would make him laugh, what he liked and didn't like, so in that respect you get to, I felt yes you do get to know him. And then through the radio when it was that bit more relaxed again and he really just started pissing about and messing around and doing stupid things and playing songs twice just cause he liked them. And it's that whole, you know you pick up on the likes and interests and that whole kind of general relaxed approach makes him, I felt, more accessible and less intimidating a [says in hushed tones] "tv star", to make it easier to get to know him even if it was in that limited access

> form of only getting to know what you see. . . . You get to know the bits that you're allowed to see and with Phillip it's not a million miles away from the Phillip that isn't on the tv, the Phillip that you do meet at the stage door now . . .

Rya is also well aware of the limited way in which she got to know Schofield purely through his shows, but she says that, "when I was watching the telly I knew that he was someone I liked and I liked his sense of humour and all that kind of thing". Rya goes on to explain that the second time she had any contact with Schofield was on the phone when he gave her a call in response to a letter which had been sent to him by her friend. She describes this experience as "very strange" because even though she had never spoken to him before, she found it easy to chat away to him. She says:

> I knew enough about him to know that I could lie jokingly and he would find it funny and I could chat to him and I would have no problem and I would have a laugh. So, in a kind of way that is him [she knows], but it's a part of him that's still kind of tv, radio, you know, it's still his professional side. I don't think, I mean, he wouldn't completely let down his guard in that situation so you wouldn't know him completely. But em, so I kind of knew him, well enough to be able to talk to him . . . I did feel comfortable on the phone to him.

However she goes on to say that, though she thought she did at the time, she didn't know him then the way she knows him now. Her relationship with Schofield is no longer restricted to mediated quasi-interaction (broadcasting) or even mediated interaction (telephone), but includes face-to-face interaction, through which non-reciprocal "knowing" gives way to reciprocal knowing. As Rya elaborates:

> Getting to know someone is also a kind of, it's a two-way thing as well and you're only going one-way [in a para-social relationship], I mean, right now if I go down [to London] and I'll chat to him or whatever and he'll go, oh how are you doing, how are you getting on and that kind of thing . . . it's a conversation, where it's kind of small talk or whatever, but he gets to know me and I get to

know him. I mean he's been getting to know me for years and now he does know me . . .

The interviewees were then asked whether they thought that in being personal, spontaneous, and conversational, Schofield was "being himself" on television. Everyone was in complete agreement that he does reveal his real personality in his programmes; that, for example, on *Going Live* he was being himself and was not putting on an act.

Abby: I mean he doesn't, he wouldn't put on an act. I mean obviously he wouldn't walk on the set if he'd just had an argument with someone and still be huffy about it, so in that sense he's got to be professional.

Samantha: Yeah and like if he feels like completely rough or whatever he's not going to come on and go oh I feel really rough, so there's a front to an extent but only like to the same extent as you if you go into work.

Abby: Exactly. . . . It's still the same person.

Samantha and Abby are definite that Schofield is being himself, albeit as a professional. Lindsay and Rya are in agreement, though their statements are slightly more moderate. Was Schofield revealing his real personality on television?

Lindsay: Yeah. I mean everyone has different versions of themselves anyway for different people, but none of them vary greatly. I mean it's almost like what you see [of Schofield] on the tv, is probably how you and I would maybe be with relatives and then you've got how you would be with friends . . . ever so slightly different and there's certain things you couldn't do in some places but, you know, I don't think he, I just think it's that simple, it really is just him being him in that environment.

. . . Catherine: So we can believe then that on *Going Live* he was really enjoying himself.

Lindsay: Oh yeah, he's not that good an actor! . . . No I mean when you get to know the person, through whichever means, you can, like we were saying, you

> can spot when they're really enjoying themselves and when they're just pretending to enjoy themselves and there was very little about *Going Live* that made you think, in fact there was virtually nothing in *Going Live* that would make you think ok that's contrived, they don't wanna be there, that's not working. . . . But with Phillip and Sarah, it was like no, they're just out there having fun. So. Even when they say it's not just us it's everyone in the studio all together having a good time, it's like yeah it very obviously is. I mean the way they'd all mess around and laugh in the background.

In relation to the question about Schofield being himself, Rya said:

> He wasn't really being himself but he wasn't putting on an act either, he was being a tv presenter. . . . I mean you can't completely be yourself on tv . . . so, he was himself in that context, to a certain extent, I mean he, I don't know. He was, in the unscripted stuff, he kind of was himself, yeah, cause he was so relaxed but . . . He was being himself to a certain extent but in the context of working . . . you've got to kind of be up when you're on tv . . . it's a bigger version of him.

Rya demonstrates a certain knowingness about television presentation, an awareness that it is not the "real" Schofield she is responding to. Nevertheless, she does believe that this is a version of him. Furthermore, she goes on to state that, like Lindsay, she too thinks he was genuinely enjoying himself and having great fun.

As has been suggested by Abby above already, it was important to believe that Schofield was being genuine and crucial that their beliefs about him were confirmed on meeting him. Samantha says that when they met him:

> [to Abby] He wasn't even like, sort of, nice but different was he?
>
> Abby: No not at all. Completely, exactly the same.
>
> Samantha: He was exactly the same.

Lindsay also regards his authenticity as important:

> In the beginning the belief is that, you know, that's just him and then when you meet him you go ok I was right, that is just him. OK it's the case that we've all seen him in bad moods, we have seen the other non-tv side, but it is him.
>
> Catherine: And that is an important thing isn't it?
>
> Lindsay: Yeah. I mean you wouldn't like someone if they were that obviously false. It's like how you pick your friends. If there was someone you think oh they seem quite nice and then you find out the truth, huh sod off then. With Phillip there hasn't been any of that you're not how you claim to be, that's just him.

The interviews then moved on to ask what everyone thought about Schofield's ITV shows. Again based on previous discussions with fans, it was suggested they are disappointing and that this is partly because they are scripted and do not give Schofield the opportunity to "be himself".

Samantha mentioned that it is frustrating because we know he can do better than some of his newer shows allow him to. Although Abby has enjoyed some of his more recent series, she thinks that generally his ITV programmes have been quite bad. Interestingly though, they tend not to watch Schofield's programmes on television any more because they have been to the recordings instead.

Lindsay agreed that the ITV shows are disappointing. However, she says that even though she didn't think *Talking Telephone Numbers* was any good, it did "have its moments". These could be said to be moments when Schofield and Emma Forbes were "genuinely" having fun or the unscripted moments. Lindsay doesn't think the right

vehicle has been found for him on the independent channels, and argues that Schofield works better without a script.

> I think for some reason, because ITV have got, are so beholden to, to the shareholders and the advertisers, they haven't got the scope to let their presenters run as free as the BBC have. Which is a pity. But even then you started to see the decline in em, in *Television's Greatest Hits* [on BBC1], when it went scripted. He works better without a script. . . . [He] puts it his own way and still gets the stuff across. People will write [scripts] thinking well that sounds like him, but it's kind of like second rate approximation. I mean some of the lines are funny in *TV Gold*, and he pulls some of them off with suitable aplomb, but it's still not quite Phillip.

Rya talked about quite enjoying Schofield's ITV programmes, although she says she is glad she went to see *TV Gold* being recorded because it was much funnier seeing it in the studio. She continues:

> *One in a Million*, I thought it was good for his career, in that it's a semi-serious programme and he, it just shows that he is a very good presenter. I mean, it's just work and I think he sees it like that as well, it's just work, I mean, it's not, he's not going to be in tears when he finishes it, he's not going to think, oh no, oh why is this finishing, or whatever, it's a job, it's a tv programme and he's doing it. Same as *Quest*.

The attitude she attributes to Schofield here contrasts sharply with her assumptions about his genuine enthusiasm and emotional feelings for *Going Live*. As this citation from Rya suggests, and as the participant observation confirms, these fans give much thought to Schofield's professional career, discuss it, and have fairly strong views on it. Rya later argues that television can't challenge Schofield sufficiently, can't give him a good enough vehicle for him to get the same enjoyment out of it that he used to do - these days he's just another presenter. She does point out that his programmes are not getting bad ratings nonetheless.

> Rya: The thing is, on *Going Live* something different would happen every time, and you would think, [excitedly] oh did you see that, did you see what he did, did you see what he said. You're not going to see that as much on *One in a Million*, and I don't tape it every week the way I used to, and I don't, em, necessarily watch them all . . . because [in these shows] the content is more important than the presenters or whatever, that kind of thing, you're going to see more of spooky stories and that kind of thing, than him. And nothing's really going to happen anyway, I mean there's going to be no big laughs, there's going to be no big prat falls, there's going to be no conkers or whatever.

The ITV programmes are recorded so all spontaneity, including the sort of mistakes common on *Going Live*, is missing. (Schofield was once accidentally hit on the head by a giant conker during the live Saturday morning show.) Rya does watch and tape live appearances he makes on other shows, because then there is some uncertainty about what exactly will happen. She also says:

> *Dolittle* is more important to me than his ITV shows because when you go and see *Dolittle* you'll see, you know, it is a completely different show every time, and there are little nuances and it is really enjoyable to go and see. Whereas tv is just this little job that he has that, you know, pays some of his bills and he presents them and that's it, he does a good job presenting them but they're nothing out of the ordinary.

Rya goes on to talk about the importance for her of the milestones in Schofield's life - those significant events that will be discussed for years - such as the Newquay roadshow, the first night of *Joseph*, the premier of *Dolittle*, and his appearing on *This is Your Life*. His programmes, on the other hand, are nothing special nowadays, and since Schofield himself doesn't particularly care about them, she wouldn't go out of her way not to miss them.

In relation to the question about the scripted ITV shows, the suggestion was made that a new viewer couldn't get to know Schofield through these programmes the way

audiences did through Children's BBC and *Going Live*. Everyone agreed wholeheartedly with this. Abby remarked that Schofield's personality simply does not come through in these scripted shows the way it could when he wasn't reading from a script. Rya expressed the belief that if people are becoming fans nowadays it will be from seeing Schofield in his theatre shows, not through picking up on him from his television programmes as they did.

The interviewees were asked whether they look for the bits in Schofield's recent shows where his personality does manage to come through. Samantha and Abby do not deliberately look for this but they do notice it.

> Abby: I'm definitely not looking for them, I'm not looking for them, em, I think you can, I think you can see certain things yeah, I mean, you can, in silly sort of instances like, I don't know, where he's scripted to do something and crack a joke or something and laugh, you can tell whether he's laughing because he's supposed to or whether he's really laughing cause he's Phillip. Things like that I can see.

Samantha added that they can tell when something shouldn't have happened.

Lindsay gave the following answer:

> Yeah, I mean it's not specifically why you watch it, you think, I mean I end up watching things out of stupid out of a misplaced sense of loyalty, it's like oh he's on the telly I suppose I better watch it [laughs], it's stupid cause you know in your heart of hearts the programme's going to be trash and it's like *why?*, but you know you do watch it and go oh maybe, maybe there'll be one funny moment and you know that funny moment will be him, just saying ah sod the script. . . . It's funny though if it's if he's on like an interview programme like *GMTV* then you know you're going to get, then it's going to be pretty reasonable stuff. And even when he was presenting it with Emma, scripted but at the same time it was messing around. I thought *This Morning* was as close in recent years as we've got to decent Phillip tv.

> Catherine: When he did *This Morning* with Caron, that was really good wasn't it?
>
> Lindsay: With Caron, yeah, yeah. On the Friday with the phone-in? And em. there was some girl, somebody phoned in on how her mother-in-law was going on the honeymoon or or there was something mothers-in-law or something and he said maybe she'll come as well and the whole place just fell about laughing, it's like yeah, that's a Phillip faux pas if ever there was one. But that was all just so natural and it was like heh *Going Live*, Phillip's just put his foot in it, again.
>
> Catherine: That's what he needs, it's something like that.
>
> Lindsay: It's something like that, that's the sort of vehicle that is required, when he can just, yes slightly scripted but, just just take over.

Rya picked up on this question in relation to Schofield's theatre shows. She notes that she has been to see *Doctor Dolittle* a number of times. Now that she knows the show and the story, she looks for all the different, extra, out-of-the-ordinary bits and she gets a lot of enjoyment spotting them - the ad-libs, the mistakes, and the in-jokes. She says that she watches for "the peripheral bits", "the nuances", the funny bits that are going over the heads of the rest of the audience. Similarly, she talks about liking being part of the live studio audience when Schofield records his television programmes because he messes around and has fun "as himself" in-between takes. Furthermore, she comments:

> That's the kind of thing that kind of sneaks into tv programmes a little bit . . . he has mannerisms that are always going to be in whatever he does and it's weird because in a way it's nice but in a way you're just so used to it you think, oh well that's just Phillip, you know, and it's like, you kind of think, well what else is he going to do that's just Phillip really.

As has been highlighted in the case study chapter, Schofield has always appeared a lot in magazines. In the first part of this thesis it was suggested that through magazines, newspaper articles, interviews, and so on, viewers can "get to know" a presenter even better. These individuals were asked whether that was the case for them with Schofield.

Again it was surprising to discover that something it was thought would play a considerable role in sustaining their para-social relationship (i.e., the consumption of subsidiary material) was not regarded as particularly important.

Drawing on my own experience, I admitted that I felt closer to Schofield because I could see photographs of his house or his family. The same was not true for Samantha and Abby. Again they explain that they got to know more *about* Schofield through magazines, but that this is different to knowing him as a person. Samantha does note however that they have come across people who do feel they know Schofield purely through watching him and reading about him. She says she has seen people meet him for the first time at the stage door after a show and talk to him "like, you know, they saw him yesterday"; and she suggests this just depends on what sort of person you are. Abby says that reading about Schofield in magazines didn't make her feel closer to him because, she states, "it's all just facts isn't it?" (They were both "chuffed to bits" about the family photos in *Hello!* nonetheless.)

Lindsay gave a similar answer:

> Um, I think with the magazines you get a lot of kind of like facts and figures and fill-in bits . . . but the basic getting to know him, I mean I think on that, that's what makes him laugh, how he laughs, you know, how he's going to react to things, em, magazines have kind of filled in the gaps a bit, but the actual getting to know him bit is off the tv and seeing him doing what he's doing and listening to him chatting about stuff on the radio.

For Rya, subsidiary material had more relevance to the activity of collecting:

> I think, I mean to a certain extent, I mean it was interesting and I was, I would buy all the stuff and I would check all the magazines to see what he was in, but mainly it was a kind of extension of taping all the *Going Live*s and taping all the trails and not wanting to miss anything. I mean, I, in a way I, a lot of the time, once I knew all that I was interested in, I kind of thought, well I don't really need to know what aftershave you wear and I don't need, a certain part of me thought this is really feeding a craven part of me that, that is reading this and thinking [puts on silly "anorak" voice] oh that's interesting, oh I've bought that, or whatever, on the other hand I was thinking, why are you telling me this, if, I can't believe you're actually giving out this information about your life because I was thinking, I would never ever say anything like that in an interview, you are so dense and, years later he regretted letting people in his house, filming and seeing it, and he had to move house because his house was spotted . . .

She continues her point about Schofield's openness and her response to it:

> I don't think he thought to be as guarded because it wasn't really in him to be so guarded, he just, he didn't, I mean, he didn't see that it would be a problem later on . . . to a certain extent I liked being able to read all this stuff but at the other end of the scale I just thought, why are you telling me this, I mean I am going to buy it because I buy everything, I mean I'm not discriminating, I mean I don't care if it's a bad review or a good review of your programme, I will buy it because that's just what I do, you know, I can't not have something.

So she seems to experience a mixture of rather liking the fact that she could find out details about him, but also feeling uncomfortable about it at the same time (though adding it to her collection nonetheless). She even claims to have "respected his privacy a lot more than he seemed to". As with the other interviewees, Schofield's being open about his private life is not a necessary requirement for her to maintain her relationship with him. In fact, it seems that disclosing intimacies is something he could overdo.

> Rya: I, like I mean the pictures in *Hello!*, like of his family and that kind of thing, I thought they were great, because, he'd obviously decided that pictures were going to be printed of his family, so he thought, I'll do them in *Hello!*, that's it, no-one's chasing me for them, I get a bit of money for it, it's finished, you know, and it's, it's an accepted way of doing it, and it gets it out of the way and it's also for his fans and stuff like that and people that have been following him,

> and I thought that was lovely and I thought it was the best thing he could have done, em, but then other, you know, there's loads of other kinds of, he's done so many things and I just think [groans] oh why?

She insists that knowing about his private life didn't make her feel closer to him or make her feel that she knew him better. She adds:

> I mean, stuff that he's said in interviews means that I know more about him but, it's not necessarily stuff that I needed to know, and stuff that I might have wanted to know. So, I don't think magazine articles have contributed anything really to, I mean if I had read nothing, if I'd watched tv, listened to the radio, I'd still be in exactly the same place, they haven't changed a thing . . .

In relation to the previous question about subsidiary material, it was also interesting to discover whether (as the theory suggests) fans are interested in insignificant details. Schofield used to talk about details from his everyday life. Was it important that he did so?

Samantha and Abby can understand how his talking about what he'd been up to could help people to feel closer to Schofield, or to feel that they knew him better; indeed they are aware of other fans for whom this was the case. As before however, they do not feel this way themselves. Again they attribute this to the sort of person you are. Lindsay answered that such knowledge builds upon the initial connection. She says it was certainly nice to know those little things - his sofa getting stolen is the one that sticks in her mind. However she is not quite sure whether it makes her feel "closer" to him. In her answer, Rya talks about knowing insignificant details as being characteristic of interpersonal relationships:

> I mean, that's kinda, that was good in the way that, you know, your friends might say, ah did you see that film or whatever, oh did you think it was any good, and because he's, I mean to a certain extent he is part of your life, and you think, oh I wonder if he's seen that, because you know he'd like it, or I wonder what, you know, like his Guy Fawkes parties and stuff like that, or his bonfire night parties whatever, and you're going, ah god I bet Phillip's doing that . . .

The fact that Schofield would chat about and choose to share everyday details like this, and that she would think about what he was up to, Rya describes by saying "that's life". She continued:

> He is so relaxed on tv and on radio that, I mean, when the set broke down in *Dolittle*, he was chatting away and all this to the audience and stuff. . . . He is very comfortable in front of an audience or in front of a tv camera or a microphone, and he can chat away, and he's not inhibited saying, thinking, well what am I going to say or whatever. He does have a presence. There are a lot of people in theatre who think he doesn't have a presence, but he does have a stage presence, and it's, it's different to theatrical actors, but it's there, and especially like if something does go wrong, he will be on his feet, he will have his mind going really quickly and he'll be able to come up with a line, say something really quickly, because he's so relaxed and he knows what he's doing and he knows where he is and he's confident, confident enough to say, ach I can't believe it . . .

It is interesting that Rya acknowledges that Schofield's stage presence is not one typically associated with the theatre, and relates this to his background in broadcasting. Therefore it seems that his presence remains that of "being natural" as opposed to "being affected" (as a theatrical actor might be thought to be). Note also that she refers to his having always naturally been like this since childhood. She explains:

> It comes from working in children's tv to a certain extent. You don't want to be false cause kids pick up on it. So your job is to just be natural, and, I mean it works, it's the way he's always done it, and it, and he knows how to do it really well, and he just does it without thinking. So it's just, I mean that's just the way he is now, if something goes wrong he can just start yacking away or whatever and have a laugh. And what makes him different from other people is, he will

> be confident enough to start the laugh going, and to say all these daft things that'll start other people talking or whatever, you know, he always, he's kind of a ring-leader, which seems to be something from his childhood [laughs].

So Schofield is seen as being naturally confident. It is only his confidence that distinguishes him from most people because apart from this he is like everyone else. In Chapter Three the ordinariness that is central to Schofield's persona was highlighted, as was the possible contradiction between this ordinariness and his move into the theatre where the ordinary has little place. Schofield deals with his "stage stardom" by emphasising that, while this is an exciting career digression, he is primarily "just" a presenter and will not be "giving up the day job" (e.g., Wogan, 1992, March 13). He insists he does not belong in the realm of the theatre, is not musically talented or an actor, and is more at home in broadcasting. He argues that, as a presenter, there are a limited number of theatre roles he could play and that it would be presumptuous of him to think otherwise (Finnigan & Madeley, 1993, December 16).

Having introduced the topic of Schofield discussing his private life in public, the subjects were also asked if it is important that he talks about his family in interviews. The intention here was to determine whether it is possible to feel involved with Schofield's family too. It had been observed, for instance, that when his father was ill, this was a cause of concern among fans who were worried about how Schofield would be feeling.

In response, Samantha made the point that on occasions like that, you do feel for him as you would for anyone you care about in your everyday life. Both Samantha and Abby also agreed with certainty that they would be concerned about Schofield's family.

Samantha said that she would be "completely devastated" if, for example, Molly had meningitis; to a greater extent even than for some people she knows in "real" life. Yet, although they note that it is very nice, it is not important to them that Schofield talks about his family.

Lindsay believes it is fairly important that he talks about his family, from a human interest point of view, but not overridingly so. She says she thinks he gets the balance right; he doesn't overdo it and isn't secretive. She describes the latter as "not him" and "very Hollywood", but yet stresses that he can't give away all of his private life. In response to the question asking about feeling concern for Schofield himself as you might for a friend, Lindsay said:

> Well if you think how many years, I mean all of us, how many years have we been doing this, ten years, well it's more than that isn't it, thirteen years, and, if you've had any kind of interest in someone for thirteen years, you would worry about them and things related to them as you would a friend because that person has been a figure in your life for so long.

Lindsay introduced the notion of "degree" to talk about levels of involvement and concern. She contrasted the strength of her feelings for Schofield with those for other familiar figures who have been around for years and gave a film star as an example: So she may be interested in Mel Gibson's private life, but to nowhere near the same extent that she cares about Schofield.

Rya too was asked about whether her interest in Schofield extends to her having feelings for his family. She herself used the example of Schofield's dad being ill as an occasion when people were concerned, and explained that some took this as "a really

personal, close thing". She says that this wasn't the case for her however and she partly accounts for this in the fact that she simply doesn't come from an emotional family. She explains:

> I can't work like that because I don't know them. And, it wouldn't be the same as if my dad was sick, or my brother was sick or whatever, it's just not the same, and I can't act like it is the same, and I think a lot of people did, and I can't, so that's just me. So. It's just, it's a whole emotional thing that I don't have.

She elaborates in relation to her feelings for Schofield:

> I mean I was sick to my stomach the first night of *Joseph*, I was thinking, oh my god I'm so nervous, so nervous, and worried for him . . . and that's because I kind of, did feel closer to the whole thing, because I'd done all the roadshows and knew loads of people who were going to be in the audience and we were all kind of worried for him and . . . it's so much of a trauma, but, he's the reason I'm there, it's not his dad or something like that. It's, I find it to be a bit hypocritical to, for me to say, oh and I'm worried for his family and I'm worried for his dog and, oh and how's Peaches [his cat], you know, I don't latch on to absolutely anything to do with him because "it makes me closer to him", I, I don't see it that way. I think it's cut and dried. I'm in it because of him . . . I couldn't be so false as to [be otherwise].

As is also clear from her earlier comments, it is the professional Schofield that matters to Rya.

The interview followed up on the idea of feeling for Schofield as you do for a friend by asking the interviewees if Schofield is like a friend to them. Referring to my own experience, I confided that when I started college and was living in the halls of residence, watching Schofield was a great comfort to me because he was familiar and it was like having a friend from home. Indeed, I knew him better than all the people I was living with at the time. I wondered whether they had experienced anything like this.

> Lindsay: For me it's very strange, I have two Phillips. There's the Phillip that I know, the Phillip that I will quite happily chat to and make a fool of myself in front of . . . but also I have this kind of fantasy Phillip, who you'd like to think if he knew what I was going through would go don't worry, it'll be OK. . . .
>
> Catherine: That he would do the things like a friend would do, or being there for you like a friend.
>
> Lindsay: Friend, yeah. I think because he comes across as just so relaxed and normal and, you know, hey this is me, no, no real pretences about him, then, that inspires trust, you feel you could trust that person even if you'd never met them before ever, you feel you'd be able to trust that person. He's often said he's had, when on *Going Live* he'd get letters from kids saying I'm going through this that and the other, I'm being abused, my parents are getting divorced, and who could turn to him for advice and comfort, cause he has inspired that kind of trust.

Although she doesn't quite say that Schofield acted as a friend, Rya does say the following about him as a source of comfort:

> This is how it actually started for me like. When I was at school, em, I started watching it in the afternoons, and I quite enjoyed it, and then circumstances happened eh involving my group of friends, that meant someone moved to our area who made my life hell, and who used to hang around with all my friends. So if I'm going to choose between having a miserable evening with my friends cause this person is there, or sitting in front of the telly watching Phillip, I'm going to pick watching Phillip. And that was something comforting to me, especially when I enjoyed it so much, I mean I loved it so much. And as, you know, the more and more I watched the more I got into it and I really did enjoy it, and it meant a lot to me, so that when *Going Live* started, it was fantastic and I thought, oh wow, cause he loves Saturday morning stuff and he really wanted, and that still meant a lot to me even though I wasn't in the same situation.

She goes on to say that from 1985 until 1987 Schofield was an emotional support and agrees with the suggestion that he was filling or taking the space of a friend. After that, while her fandom did rule her life a bit, Schofield wasn't so much of a crutch. Yet it could be said that some sort of bond had been formed.

> Rya: Basically he was an emotional crutch when he was doing the afternoons, and from that, even when it wasn't necessary any more, I did feel a kind of sense of loyalty and a sense of, being so used to him it was, ach in a way it was familiar, you know, because you just know, oh that's Phillip or whatever, and you've enjoyed it so much when you really needed it, and now it's there all the time and you have a good laugh, whatever, and I did feel a bit of loyalty to him from, because, although I mean he was just doing his job, there was something there that was there for me when I needed it.

Clearly fans "know" a presenter better than other viewers do, whether they have met that presenter or not. However, as has been suggested already, these fans do not think they really knew Schofield properly until they met him face-to-face. It was intended to discover more about their getting to know him (and his getting to know them) through meeting him in person.

Samantha and Abby both agreed that fans "know" Schofield better than non-fans, even if they have never had a face-to-face encounter. This is because they know more about him and are simply more familiar with what he is like. They "know" him in this respect. However Samantha and Abby believe that meeting him is crucial to really getting to know him the way they feel they know him now. They think they now know him as well as fans could possibly know him (although other fans know more about him). They say that getting to know Schofield also depends on how open he is with you when you do meet him - he is guarded with some people and more open with others - and that this is even more significant than the number of times you have met him.

Asked would she feel she "knew" Schofield had she never met him, Lindsay explains the situation as follows:

> It's familiarity. If you are watching it so intently, and you're that bit more familiar with how things are done, with what, you know, the look in the eye and you can see you can almost hear the cogs whirring in his head, it's like what the hell's he gonna do next.
>
> Catherine: But you know that he's going to do something.
>
> Lindsay: Yeah. Because you're more aware of that person's em gestures and the like, you're more, it's easier for the fan to pick up on stuff than the ordinary viewer, so yeah in that sense, the fan does know more about the person than the regular viewer or audience member. . . . I mean with Phillip *Going Live* was such a [pause], a way in, there was so much of him, that you could pick up and anyone who watched it avidly for all six series, em, would pick up on the stuff that you'd later go on to see in *Joseph*, in *Talking Telephone Numbers* and the other more constricting tv and other things that he's done. But em, so you, yeah, and then when you meet him . . . it's all there again.

It is important to note how crucial genre is here. Their getting to "know" Schofield through his television work was dependent on the fact that he presented shows which were live, unscripted, contained "zoo" elements, etc.

Everything each of the interviewees says suggests that when you meet Schofield in the flesh, he is just as he is on television. Therefore, it was wondered, is meeting him really crucial to getting to know him? The key seems to be that meeting him moves the para-social relationship onto another level; one where there is a chance of reciprocity.

> Lindsay: I think [pause] maybe if you don't ever get to meet him you're stuck on that fan level and you only get to know what you're allowed to know. . . . But to move on from that and to get to know the person behind the person, you have to meet them and you have to stand around chatting in the cold and, and, make the involvement evolve and grow and move on.

Rya agrees that meeting Schofield face-to-face is essential to getting to know him "properly". She explains that meeting him face-to-face changes the relationship because it's only when he gets to know you, that you really get to know him (and therefore most

fans never will). Crucially she distinguishes between two levels of knowing him. The first is entirely one-way, where all the "knowing" comes from the fan, and the person that they know is the professional person. It is vital to stress that while at this first level she did think she really knew him. It is only with hindsight that she realises her current level of knowing is different.

> Rya: That [the professional] is the person that most people will think they know. That is the person, you know, it'll be like, oh yeah I went to see Phillip, I've seen him four times and I've talked to him and all this kind of thing, and this was me. You know, you think you know him. But you don't really, cause he doesn't know who you are and he's not going to talk to you about, you know, god whatever happened, he's not gonna, he's not gonna swear in front of you, he's not gonna take the piss out of you, he's not gonna wind you up, he's not gonna say about . . . these things that he says in normal conversation, treating you like a normal human being . . .
>
> Catherine: Which is what he would do with you now you mean?
>
> Rya: Now we know him and he knows us and, to a certain extent I do know him now, and I think that, although, when he was on tv and before I met him that much, I thought I knew him and to a certain extent I kind of did. I see it as different, I knew him differently then to the way I do now. Now I know him in the way that when we were walking up the aisle of a theatre he went, oh hi, and Steph [his wife] went, hi didn't see you there, and we'll have a chat about the weather and all this kind of thing. It's two different ways of knowing someone. There's knowing all about them, whatever, knowing everything they do and what they are . . . and then there's the whole, hiya how ya doing, oh what's up and all this kind of thing, chatting like a normal human being, which is a different thing.

So the second way of knowing him that she distinguishes is a two-way thing and it is not mediated. It is at this level of dialogue that she believes you get to see the "real" him. Rya continues:

> It's like, beforehand when he doesn't have a clue who you are, and he's being the person signing at the stage door, it's that whole other thing. When he knows who you are, it's, it's just like real life, it's mundane . . . He treats it differently because he would talk to you the way he'd talk to other people, talk to people he works with, whatever, whereas, with em people who are signing autographs he

> knows that they're seeing Phillip Schofield, you know, he is so famous kind of thing and he is aware of that, and people act weird! . . . It just happens that now I see the real part of him rather than the whole career, professional part of him.

In previous discussions with the gang, almost everyone had talked about feeling comfortable in Schofield's company and being laid back about seeing him now that they have met him so many times. Asked about this in the interview, Samantha and Abby feel it would be fair to say that of them. Lindsay admits she does still sometimes feel in awe of Schofield and that meeting him can be quite awkward even though they know each other. Rya says it was embarrassing and annoying when he couldn't put your name to your face and you had to introduce yourself each time you met him, although she recognises this is understandable because he was meeting hundreds of people. Rya says of meeting him:

> For years it was more of a trauma than anything else, because, I mean to me, I followed the roadshows round and, I wasn't a fan of any other person, I was a fan of him, and it was important to me and it was special to me, and I didn't just want to go, ach thank-you very much for the picture or whatever, I wanted to actually say something, because a lot of the time people don't actually talk to him and if you talk to him he would talk to you back, but I didn't want to say something totally stupid either, and I mean, you don't know how much time he's got, what kind of mood he's going to be in, what reaction you're going to get and you're going to castrate yourself afterwards anyway, saying [dramatically], oh why did I say that, why did I do that, I can't believe I said that, because basically you're thinking, right so I met him today and the only impression he has is the stupid thing I said.

She had to go through "the whole being embarrassing and being awkward and being traumatised" phase, before she moved on to a more "comfortable" stage. She thinks this was helped by meeting Schofield in the company of fans like Samantha and Abby whom he knew and trusted already. She talks about "earning your way up through persistence" and says:

> I had to really work at it and really plug away to prove that I wasn't just going to bugger off, and I wasn't weird, and I wasn't insane, and I just was like, well just normal, and just wanted to be able to talk to him . . . And then, you know, you build up the courage to actually say something, something that isn't really idiotic and be comfortable talking to him and then realise that he is actually comfortable talking to you as well so that's quite good.

She goes on to refer to what is happening in almost symbolic terms:

> It gets to the stage where, you know, you're at the back stage and there's a whole queue of people getting stuff signed, and, you'll be at the end of the queue and he'll just put his pen away. That's, that is something, where he'll just move the barrier away, go I don't need that. That is, that is quite huge.

Rya explains that before this she had to use the excuse of asking him to sign something, or of asking to take his photograph, to get the chance to talk to him. She's glad that she doesn't have to do so any more. In fact, she notes that she feels asking for his photograph would now be inappropriate, but adds, "We're not in denial. We know who we are and what we're doing, we know we are fans and he knows and he would be quite happy I'm sure to have any pictures taken."

To round off this section, which is largely about responses to and opinions of Schofield, the interviewees were asked for their thoughts on his image. This was in relation to the question raised in Chapter Two about viewers' responses to constructed personae. As was stressed in the case study, Schofield has always claimed his image and the labels used to describe him were constructed by the press; thus implying they were largely outside his control. The individuals interviewed believe this. Tied in with this point, they were also asked what role they think James Grant Management plays in Schofield's career, and in particular about the amount of control his management company has over

him. For instance, do they believe that the decision to allow his hair to go grey was not a career move but was, as Schofield insists, a personal choice?

Samantha and Abby began by making a point about the fact that Schofield smokes, but that in early articles claimed he did not. They regard this as a conscious decision to present himself to his young audience and their parents (untruthfully) as a non-smoker. However they are unsure whether this decision would have originated from Schofield himself (aware that he may be a role model) or whether he would have been following instructions from his managers (aware that the truth might damage his image and make him less marketable).

Whilst acknowledging that James Grant has a large influence over what Schofield says and does, Samantha argued that he is not controlled by them. She believes that if Schofield really wanted to do something, he would do it with or without their support. Likewise, he would not be made to do anything he did not want to do. Abby added in agreement that Schofield has a lot of say about his career. They do not believe his grey image was in any way a deliberate career move, and think that the hype surrounding it was created by the press not his management. They note that although he had been gradually going grey for a while, the papers only picked up on it when it suited them and they could make a story out of it.

Lindsay also believes that Schofield's images have been created for him by the press. She says:

> I think to a certain extent it was the, it is the press who've given him the images, the constructs, as such, but it's just because they need something to say. Every, I

> mean he's always said I'm really no different from anybody else, and I don't believe that he is any different from anyone else. . . . but because he is a media personality, the media therefore will, likes to it likes to label, the press like to label, it makes life easy.

She says she doubts James Grant controls his career, suggesting that it's probably more like "friendly advice" and "an interactive thing". She doesn't think Schofield would react well to being told what to do:

> For Pete to be the Svengali that he is claimed to be, doesn't sit well with what we know of Phillip. I think. He doesn't, maybe free spirit is the wrong word, but, he doesn't seem to be the type to be controlled like that. To take criticism and advice, yes, but not that all control, that just doesn't sit well with how Phillip is.

Taking a similar approach to Lindsay, Rya attributes responsibility to the press for the construction and distribution of Schofield's image:

> I think that the press like to pigeon-hole everyone, they like to label everything, they like to put things in their little categories so that they can deal with it. I mean it's like someone putting together, they're pushing a film that they want to get money for, whatever, they will have to say it's like *Speed* but it's got em *James Bond* bits and this kind of thing. You know what they're talking about so if someone wants to talk about Phillip they will say oh yeah he's Mr Nice Guy, he's this whatever, em, even though you could talk about half a dozen other people the exact same way. The fact he's on telly means they have to label him. But I don't think he, I don't think he went out of his way to to put across a, to say hey I'm the boy-next-door. . . . if you're [journalists are] glibbly going to say something to categorise someone, you're going to say oh Mr Nice Guy because he doesn't trash hotel rooms and he doesn't throw tantrums or whatever, he might have a, and the thing is he does have a temper, and, I've seen it, but people don't pick up on it and I think, I don't know why, I think it doesn't suit their purposes. I don't think they want to see it, so.

The individuals interviewed are all aware that presenters can be constructed personae and that recognising them as such might affect how their audiences respond to them. In

relation to this idea, Lindsay used the word "trust" again, noting that you couldn't trust a presenter if you suspected they weren't genuine. None of the interviewees can see Schofield in this way and believe that it would be overly cynical to do so: indeed, they would not have become fans if they had thought otherwise. The belief that Schofield is natural is reiterated throughout the interviews. However, Anthea Turner and Darren Day were given as examples of presenters who it is thought, as constructed personae, have images made for them, are marketed like commodities, and whose success is due to their management company. Samantha and Abby both believe that Turner "would be nothing" without James Grant. They concentrate however on Day, describing him as Peter Powell's puppet, and contrast him with Schofield. In the extract below, the comments I make as interviewer are attempts to summarise for confirmation what the interviewees have already said themselves at some length:

> Abby: But then saying that, is that because of the type of person Darren is. Because ok we've met Darren, now if, we've been there when, you know, Pete and that are steering him in the right direction, but Darren on his own he doesn't have a personality. So maybe that's why they feel they have to steer him. He's, he hasn't
>
> Samantha: He hasn't though, he is a puppet.
>
> Abby: Yeah exactly, so that's what I'm saying, so is that why.
>
> Catherine: So we're saying that . . . Phillip Schofield isn't all a big act.
>
> Abby: No [he's not], not at all.
>
> Catherine: And he's not just a persona sold by James Grant.
>
> Abby: No, no.
>
> Catherine: Like he is an independent person and they help, well, guide his career I suppose, like get him contracts and get him magazine interviews.
>
> Abby: Yep.

Catherine: But pretty much what he says in those interviews and what he does is up to him.

Samantha: I wouldn't really say James Grant help him much at all apart from working out his money and getting a cut from what he makes.

Abby: No I think Phillip's very much his own person and that. . . .

Catherine: But somebody like Darren

Abby: Yeah he is a pawn and he is a commodity.

Samantha: But I think as well [in Phillip's case] they'd [James Grant] be just like mates sitting together as well, more so than Darren cause Darren is so childish.

Abby: Yeah basically. He is dim so he has to be steered so it depends on the type of person that they are. Phillip isn't like that.

Catherine: Or Simon Mayo's not like that, or Mark Goodier's not like that.

Abby: No, no exactly.

Rya also refuses to see Schofield as a constructed persona. She too uses Day as a contrast:

> Well the thing is, I mean, you can see it in Darren Day. They have had to work their asses off to get his career and they've done really well. Darren Day is someone people know about now and it's because of the work that James Grant have done. I can see the, the work that they've put in behind him. And wherever Darren goes, especially early on in his career, there was James Grant people everywhere. But with Phillip they let him do his own thing. I mean they . . . helped him off and that kind of thing, but when he's doing the afternoons he doesn't need help, he is already there and then . . . getting *Going Live*, that wasn't like a big thing because he was an obvious choice and I'm sure they didn't have to work too hard to get him that. *Joseph* was something that landed on their laps. They didn't actually push for it, they, he decided to do it but it wasn't a manipulated thing. . . . I mean they planned his career and they planned it meticulously, em, but it was more of a career agenda, it wasn't a profile agenda. It was more of a work thing rather than, because his profile doesn't matter. As long as he is on telly doing the job, that says loads about him. That says everything you want to say.

She continues her point about James Grant's lack of role:

> You don't have to say, hey I'm a nice guy and this is whatever, em I'm very nice to kids and all this kind of thing, because he does a live tv programme. That says, for three and a half, three and a quarter hours that says so much more than anything that can be planted in newspapers. . . . Phillip really didn't do that much promo stuff, if you think about it. If you think of all the stuff that we've got, most of it is actual work. It's not promo and it's not publicity or if it is it's local stuff, like switching on the lights in Belfast or wherever, and this kind of thing. And it's just bits and pieces round which just kind of keep his profile bubbling over. They didn't have to push. And it's not even promoting a certain angle, it's not saying, hey I'm wonderful, I'm this squeaky clean guy cause I'm switching on the lights in Belfast. It's just saying, we're these big names that are going to do this and this big crowd are going to come. I don't think they ever had an agenda that was to promote an image, it was to promote his career and he didn't really do, I don't think he did enough PR, not actual, he didn't really do enough promo work to [warrant the accusation that he has been constructed and marketed].

She agrees that James Grant have had to build Darren Day's career. It could be suggested that this is due to increased competition; competition that Schofield didn't have when he started out in the mid-1980s. Since then there has been a proliferation of that type of professional personality.

Like the other interviewees, Rya denies any agenda in the grey hair phenomenon and she stresses just how normal she thinks Schofield really is.

> I mean the whole thing that he stopped dying his hair, and the world went nuts, and I'm sure he didn't think about it, he didn't think, I'm just going to stop dying my hair and there's going to be a big hoo-ha . . . I don't think even with that which was a big thing that he did it on purpose for, to follow an agenda at all, cause he just did it and then kinda went oh right, why is this so big? I mean sometimes I don't think he realises, it's funny, I don't think he realises how famous he is, cause he's just him, you know. . . . He does normal things, he has a slightly out of the ordinary job and that kind of thing and he does quite unusual things [in his job], but at the end of the day because, it's [laughs] I always dread quoting him directly but, it's something that telly gives you, and that's from *This Morning*, but it really is. People have got him up on this pedestal and so if he doesn't dye his hair it's a big thing, but big deal. . . . I really don't think that there is a whole agenda with his image that they are constantly thinking, [puts on a business man's voice] oh, right, we need him to look older now, right get that grey spray paint out, let's get that hair grey.

Likewise she explains his glasses - as he did - simply in the fact that he got sick of wearing contacts. Thus Schofield's attempts to reposition himself are regarded here as natural or inevitable developments and personal decisions.

The individuals interviewed are aware that Schofield tells the same stories repeatedly and that he tells them in a certain way. They were asked whether they think he deliberately relates anecdotes in order to create a particular impression (e.g., to appear modest or down-to-earth).

As would be expected from their previous answers, neither Abby nor Samantha believe Schofield deliberately says things to make himself seem, in Abby's words, "less like a star". Abby states he *is* just a very down-to-earth person.

> Abby: I think that's just him. That's just the way he is.
>
> Samantha: That's just the way it happened so that's the way he tells it, I think.

Lindsay doesn't think that it's a deliberate ploy either. She jokes that Schofield is not that cunning. She argues that the fact no-one has ever challenged his sincerity adds to his credibility.

> Yeah he does come across as just modest and normal and. I don't think people, even with the interviewers, the people who talk to him when he is doing all this [being modest] they always react very well to him. You know, it's like, it's a joy to have him because he's so easy to talk to. And because he doesn't make things hard and doesn't seem to be awkward and up himself and expects a lot. I think that helps, that's part of it, if they are taking him for genuine and they believe he's genuine. You know, everyone seems to have the same opinion that he isn't this construct.

Lindsay continues to stress her point that there have been plenty of opportunities for people to reveal "the truth" about Schofield, if there were grounds for them to do so, but that no-one ever has. She says nobody has even tried to take shots at Schofield or to pull him down. She goes on:

> What's the greatest insult that's ever been thrown at him, he's bland, he's boring, you know, he's just so kind of there, but isn't that just like everybody else, it's like, you know, he's just normal. . . . So god if they can only find that to throw at him.

Rya agrees that Schofield does not deliberately try to present an image of modesty, for example, in interviews. She explains that it is inevitable he will give the same answers when he is repeatedly asked the same questions; that he knows how to tell a good story and he tells the same ones over and over again simply because it's easier that way. The way he appears in interviews is, she believes, just the way he is anyway.

> I mean sometimes he will be excited about stuff, he'll go, oh do you want to see a picture? And he'll show a picture of his kids, and that's the way he is. There have been times when I've been in the audience of a tv programme and after the programme's finished and we're all packing our bags, he's gone, I've got a picture do you want to see? And he'll show a picture of his [baby].

In Chapter Three it was suggested that Schofield's showing a photograph of his daughter on air was a way of making himself appear more down-to-earth and confirming his image as a family man. Doing so may indeed give these impressions, but, as Rya suggests with her example, it seems that his enthusiasm may be genuine because this is something he does off air too. She repeats, "It's the way he is," and goes on, "It's just that he's chuffed and he's got this picture and he's going, look! And he thinks that there are people in the audience who are interested, which there was!"

Summary Conclusion

It is clear that these viewers responded to Schofield's easy-going professionalism. His conversational, informal, relaxed presentation style appealed to them: an approach which works best in live and unscripted programming. Crucially, Schofield was regarded as "natural" and "at home on tv", and his performance, while fun and entertaining, was not seen as conscious or deliberate. Of course, there is more to finding a presenter appealing than their style of presentation, and the interviewees stressed how much they liked Schofield's personality. The fact that his personality apparently came across in his media appearances was again dependent on the genre he was working in. His sense of humour, in particular, was vital here. It seems that regular television appearances are not essential for a para-social relationship to be established between presenter and viewer. Furthermore, it is not necessary that viewers feel involved with or believe they know a presenter in order for them to develop a para-social relationship. What does appear to have happened here is that these viewers felt Schofield connected with and related to his audience and they reciprocated through para-social interaction.

The interviewees are aware of the limited way in which, as audience members, they can know a presenter through his shows. The consumption of subsidiary forms of circulation does not seem to contribute to the maintenance of a para-social relationship and was, in this case, used only to fill in factual gaps. For all of these viewers it was important to meet Schofield, and their relationships with him now substantially involve face-to-face interaction. It is crucial, however, that on first meeting Schofield he was found to be exactly as he appeared to be on television: the belief that he is sincere and

genuine is central to their sustaining a relationship with him. All those interviewed believe that Schofield is "being himself" - albeit in a professional, working capacity - in his programmes, that the personality he reveals is his own, and that he is most certainly not putting on an act. These individuals expressed disappointment at the scripted and thus restricting nature of Schofield's more recent series on ITV. They enjoy the appearances he makes on other live shows (in interview situations especially) because then, it is felt, his personality does come through and he has the chance to be himself.

Finally, the fans interviewed all feel strongly that Schofield is not controlled by his management company and argue that it is too cynical to regard him as a constructed persona or a commodity. The belief that Schofield is natural and authentic is reiterated throughout the interviews: These fans make the preferred reading of Schofield the text. However it is recognised that their claims about Schofield do not apply to all personalities and that perhaps he is not, therefore, typical of presenters generally.

The Fan Relationship

To begin this section of the interview, drawing on my own experience, I suggested to the individuals I spoke with that the typical fan career of a Schofield fan might have developed as follows. Watching Schofield on Children's BBC, you become interested and then involved. Once involved, you make a commitment. At this stage you don't want to miss any programmes Schofield appears in and you start getting magazines with interviews in them because you want to learn more about him. This is when you become a fan because you've made a commitment and that commitment involves organising your life around Schofield to a certain extent. Therefore it follows that the more dedicated a fan you are, the more prepared you are to go out of your way for - or to put yourself out for – Schofield. These fans were asked whether they agreed with this description. While they all agreed in part, no-one believed it would be entirely correct to say this in their experience.

It is Abby and Samantha's opinion that, initiated by interest, you become a fan first, and then commitment and involvement follow. Samantha states that you can be a fan and just be interested without being particularly committed. Or you can be a fan who is extremely committed. The level of dedication different fans have varies considerably - but all are fans nonetheless. Indeed, the intensity of an individual fan's level of dedication can waver considerably, but their fandom remains.

Lindsay makes a similar point. She too does not agree that it is necessarily commitment that makes you a fan because you can appreciate someone and be their fan without it. She believes that being a fan can simply be about appreciation - she gives her mum's

relationship with Cliff Richard as an example. While she agrees that it is the dedicated fan who puts themself out to some extent, she is not comfortable with either the word "fan" or the word "dedicated". It was agreed that maybe "importance" is a better word - your level of fandom reflects how important the subject of your fandom is to you. Therefore, these fans have all done things that ordinary members of the audience wouldn't be prepared to do because Schofield is more important to them - he means more to them. All the fans interviewed have, for example, stood outside in terrible weather conditions waiting to see Schofield.

Like the others, Rya was unhappy about the words "involvement" and "commitment". She thinks that in her case it was more of an "interest", albeit "a very deep interest". She expressed concern that to claim to be involved or committed suggests that you are "blinded to everything else" and that your fandom "rides roughshod over everything else". She insists that her fandom of Schofield was not the "be all and end all" at the expense of the other parts of her life. Thus for Rya there is something too permanent, too "solid" or "hard and fast" about the words proposed. She agreed that fans experience more of an "investment" than other audience members but that this does not necessarily equate to a long-term commitment.

She describes her fan career in a different way. She explains that at school everyone had to have someone famous they liked. She would pick a pop star just to have a name to give when asked.[1] On one occasion some friends were looking through a magazine and she defended Schofield against their criticisms. It was only then that she realised she was a fan, and from then on when asked who she liked she would say him. Thus she is suggesting that you become a fan when you voice your interest in public. Of

course then people associate you with that interest. As for the progression of her fan career, Rya says that whereas peers at school gave up on their teenage interests, she didn't.

> It just so happened that I stuck with what I was up to when everyone else moved on to other things because, you know, *Going Live* was in full swing and whatever. So I just didn't stop doing it, and I kind of made progressions through and talked to him and saw him and this and that and the other. So. To me it was always, there was always a kind of thing a wish would happen, and sometimes it would take years, sometimes it didn't, but to me there was always a goal, not in, it was even like in a dreamworld kind of goal, it was like [longingly] oh if only he knew my name, if only I could speak to him, if only I could meet him, you know, that would be cool, I would really like to meet him, I would really like to speak to him, I would, and so when you achieve one of these it's then wishing he actually knew that I was [Rya] so he didn't have to, I didn't have to say hello my name is, do you remember, cause that's just so sad and embarrassing. So I mean I was a fan from the first time I actually said, oh I actually do like him, I think he's really good, I think he's really funny . . . I actually remember the person's bedroom that we were in, I remember the magazine as well, but that to me was when I thought I really am a fan and that's what I remember, I remember that time onward but I must have watched him a lot before that
>
> Catherine: To have reached the stage where
>
> Rya: Uh huh, where I would actually defend him.

Rya points out that being a fan is about degree. She notes that she is conscious of a certain amount of "snobbery" among fans about their degrees of fandom. It was suggested that perhaps some fans are more dedicated than others because they are prepared to go to lengths others would not. Note in Rya's reply to this suggestion that she feels it has taken considerable effort for her to achieve the relationship she currently has with Schofield.

> I think, I mean you do what you want. If you want to pursue something more then you will and if it makes you happy then it does. I don't think it makes anyone any less of a fan [if they don't], I think it's, I mean I'm happy where I've got to with this whole thing, and when I go down [to London] I have a great

> time, have a chat with him and that kind of thing and it's brilliant and I put in the work to get there, and it was work, it was a hard slog, it's a weird way of describing it but I was a fan and I kept trying to escalate that, but I don't think that makes anyone who didn't do that any less of a fan.

She says it is perfectly valid for someone who has just one CD to claim to be a fan, despite the suggestion that surely there must be a difference between a fan who has one CD, and a fan who has every single programme Schofield has ever done on video, simply because of the sheer work involved in the latter. Like Lindsay, Rya believes that the intensity of your fandom relates to how "important" it is to you - how much it means to you, the extent to which you think the fan activities you do are worth it.

Thinking about fandom in terms of level of importance is helpful when considering how these levels change over time. So, you can still be a fan, but may not be prepared to go out of your way for Schofield - as you might once have done - because you don't consider it worth doing so any more. I asked the interviewees whether, like me, their level of dedication has changed. I explained that nowadays there is simply no way I would do many of the fan activities that at one time I felt were worth doing. The interviewees could understand this.

Lindsay talks about having had a high "level of dedication" in the past, but explains that she just couldn't keep that up.

> There's things that you did when you were like sixteen, seventeen that you wouldn't do now, you grow up, your outlook on things change, I mean that's only normal. For us to stay in that same level of dedication, say, just to use that phrase, that we were all at at the height of it, or, I say we were all at, that some of us were at at the height of it, that I was at at the height of it, making sure I had everything. I used to keep a diary of everything I bought . . . but now I wouldn't even think about doing that.

The intensity of Abby and Samantha's fandom does not appear to have altered and it was decided that this was due to their having been more level-headed and less extreme throughout their long fan careers. This is not an anti-fan bias - rather it reflects the fact that they have seen fans who have been "fanatical" but have "burned out" after several years.

Rya talked about her fandom becoming part of her routine:

> I had patterns of my life, I had em Fridays and Saturdays, Friday afternoons I was going home and watching the trail [for *Going Live*] and listening to the Friday club, there was just things that I did . . . but it's just another little thing that I did and I integrated it into my life. It's, and to me it was, you could kind of call it a hobby. . . . To me I integrated it into my life so that it wasn't a big stress and I made it work because I wanted to have a life hassle free but to also have the good bits, I wanted to have the bits that I enjoy, I want to have so.

A large part of making her life easier has been not telling colleagues about her fandom. She says, "I'm not going to open myself up to abuse."

Rya explains that nowadays she is less prepared to stand outside in the rain just waiting for Schofield after a show - however it doesn't bother her enough for her to stop doing so and this is mainly because it is a social occasion, a time for meeting and interacting with other fans, a chance to talk about the show. Later in the interview Rya claimed that being a fan is so demanding, she has thought about giving it up at times. However then she has a trip to London and, because she has such a good time, decides that it is worth continuing.

It has been suggested that fans feel involved with a presenter's career sympathetically and emotionally. Having observed that this is certainly the case for these fans, they were asked for examples.

Abby gave the Newquay roadshow as an example, explaining that both she and Samantha were so sick with nerves that they nearly didn't make it to the show. Similarly, on Schofield's first night in *Joseph* they were so nervous they couldn't eat. Samantha says she was "petrified" for him. Lindsay felt like this too:

> I mean it's not everyone who would sit there and watch the rehearsal film for *Joseph* [shown on *Going Live*] and sob at the end! . . . The list is endless of all the moments when you, you feel elated for him or sick to your stomach with nerves or. . . . At school the day that he started in *Joseph*, how I got through that day at school I've no idea, but em, needless to say my lunch came home intact. That was a very strange day I think for everyone, cause it's all that excitement and the nervousness as well . . . the list [of examples] goes on and on.

Having noted that Schofield and Sarah Greene were both crying, Rya talks about feeling sad when *Going Live* ended:

> It was the end of an era. It was the end of stuff he wanted to do, you know, he loved Saturday mornings, he loved the afternoons, and it was over. . . . You know they've enjoyed it and they're kinda sad to see it go and you just think well I'm sad to see it go too, and I've watched it for however many episodes, 179 episodes, something like that [jokes about anoraks].

In a similar vein, again unlike ordinary audience members, fans feel more involved with aspects of a personality's private life too. I know from experience that when Schofield's daughter was born, many of his fans were excited and delighted. When I asked about

this in the interviews, Lindsay told me about crying when she saw in the newspaper that Molly had been born.

However, as ever, it would be wrong to suggest that all fans share these feelings. Rya is less emotionally attached than Lindsay. She explains that she feels less involved living in Glasgow where she is somewhat removed. So, for instance, going to see Schofield immediately after Molly was born was simply not an option for Rya. Others in the gang did have this opportunity. Rya says, "If I had been able to go down and see him then I would have been a lot more excited," but as it was she really doesn't think she was that thrilled about Molly.

The interview moved on to consider other forms of interaction that fans might have with Schofield. It was my own experience that I regarded writing fan letters to be a normal fan activity and, having done so myself, assumed that these fans would write to Schofield. Therefore it was surprising to discover that no-one interviewed does or would admit to having done so in the past. Even when they were not meeting Schofield, they did not regard writing to him as a way of having some sort of real contact with him (as I did).

Abby explains that she never wrote to him because she didn't think her letters would reach him. Lindsay claims that she doesn't write letters to Schofield and never has done. She does send him a card on his birthday and at Christmas, and she gives him presents on occasion. She would put a card or a note in with the present, but keeps them short and chatty. However she did write into Schofield's programmes and sent in requests. Rya does not write to Schofield personally, though she confesses to having done so

once. She frequently wrote into the programmes and sent requests, and about this she says:

> To me it was a fun and creative thing, it was kind of getting involved and I would write poems or . . . I would write a request in rhyme . . . but I never actually wrote to him, well I did once, em, when I was really depressed or something like that and I was asking, I can't remember what I was asking, but I did it once and I wrote it and I got a reply.

This reply was from Schofield's mum. Rya explains she would not write to Schofield because he didn't know her. She never saw it as a way of sustaining a relationship with him.

Having established that corresponding with Schofield is not important, the subjects were then asked about meeting him. For all the individuals interviewed, their fan relationship is a mixture of two elements: seeing Schofield in shows (both television and theatre) and meeting him face-to-face. They were asked about the significance of the latter - situated interaction (the former is referred to as mediated quasi-interaction).

While it was important to Abby and Samantha that they met Schofield to confirm what he was really like, they both feel they would still be fans if they had never met him, though definitely not to the same extent. When asked for a current proportion, they estimated that 75% of their relationship with Schofield is face-to-face.

It is crucial to note that it is not the case that their face-to-face interaction with Schofield replaces or supersedes the mediated form completely however. Both remain a part of the relationship. In other words, being able to meet Schofield in person whenever you

want to does not mean that you stop watching him on television or seeing him on stage. Earlier in her interview, Lindsay pointed out that she still watches Schofield's shows even though she is regularly meeting him in person at the stage door of the theatre or at the recording of a television programme. She explains that both sides (mediated quasi-interaction and situated interaction) are equally important and that together they make the "whole". In response to the question about the importance of meeting Schofield, Lindsay replied:

> You get to the stage where you've watched everything, you've got everything, so it's the next logical progression, for me it was anyway, you work your way up, it's like I've got everything, now I've maybe had something read out on the radio, so you just want, you just want to do it. And thankfully with Phillip he is accessible, I mean if it someone like if it was *Take That* or *Boyzone* or a pop group or any big Holywood actor [it would be difficult to meet them] . . . so yeah it was important.

However she points out that she would still be interested in Schofield if she hadn't met him, that it wouldn't have stopped her fan career, although it wouldn't have taken the form it has now. She says:

> It's [meeting him is] not like the be all and end all, but it was important to me that I did, and then it just snowballs from there, so you do it once you want to do it again and again and again and then you want to move on a bit further so you can actually hold more than a one line conversation that goes beyond, hi the show was really good could you sign this for me please and can I have a photograph, and that moves on and then you want him, you know, you want him to know who you are and recognise the face and be able to put the name to the face and go on from there.

Rya explained that she had goals and one of these goals was meeting Schofield. Unlike the others, she doesn't think she would still be a fan if she'd never met him. With regard to the proportions of mediated quasi-interaction and face-to-face interaction, for the

longest time in her fan career Rya's relationship with Schofield involved the former only. Then it became a combination of both, but one where meeting him was something exciting. She explains that now a greater part of her relationship is meeting Schofield face-to-face in a way that is more relaxed and less fan-like. However this does not mean that the "fan" side of things has disappeared - she can go to see a show and not meet him afterwards or she can go to meet him without seeing the show. Both mediated and situated forms of interaction exist concurrently, in degrees that vary according to the situation.

The interview went on to ask these fans about the nature of their fan relationship with Schofield. With reference to my own experience, I suggested that "fancy", "admire", and "loyalty" might be key words here. Again drawing on my own experience, I questioned whether the nature of their relationship has changed or moved through stages.

The type of fan relationship Samantha and Abby both have seems very much rooted in admiration and has not changed in this respect. Neither admit to having ever really fancied Schofield, though they do think he looks good. For them being a fan has not involved romantic feelings; rather, it was his personality that appealed to them. Liking Schofield as a person and admiring him as a presenter have always been central to their fandom. They keep on supporting him because they like him, not purely out of loyalty.

Lindsay, on the other hand, does agree that the nature of her relationship has changed - but remains a mixture of admiration, loyalty, and fancying as suggested. She says she

admires Schofield for what he has done and for how skilled he is at what he does; and also, she mentions, for knowing his limitations. When asked about loyalty she said:

> I mean the loyalty works on two levels, you watch things [his ITV shows] and you know they're going to be bad but you feel you ought to at least have a look. And then the other side of that you, you just have to be there on the first preview and the premier and the shows, to be there and pledge your support and say we're here for you, and it's, you know, go for it. So it's the loyalty works, you know, you're there through the good and the bad.

Lindsay does still fancy Schofield and has always done so. Note also what she says about caring:

> . . . maybe originally it was like oh he's really lovely, and he seems really nice and that's part of the whole fancying thing. And then as you, as you get a bit older and you really start watching the stuff thinking oh he's really really good I want to do that, and then you start really watching the programmes and you know he's actually really very good at what he does . . . I mean it all balances out, when you're, at the beginning it was all, oh my god he's so gorgeous and it's like that's the be all and end all, em, and then it moves on, and you say well there's more to him than that, he isn't just eye candy, he is very good at what he does and, you know, you appreciate him as such and you admire him as such, so it becomes more of a full package, you know, this guy is good at what he does, seems to be a very nice person and is drop dead gorgeous in the process. The three make up the whole.
>
> Catherine: And then the loyalty grows as well.
>
> Lindsay: Yeah, yeah. It's almost as though you become, it's almost like it becomes addictive. It's like you know if you gave it up you'd miss it too much, well for me if I, I honestly think if I gave it up and I stopped going and stopped watching stuff, basically stopped, I mean, to me that would mean I'd have to stop caring about him, and about what he does and that. I couldn't do it because I would miss it too much.
>
> Catherine: Well you can't stop caring.
>
> Lindsay: No . . . and if it's someone you've turned to, in times, you know, you feel you, there's that whole, the whole caring side of it.

Lindsay goes on to explain that Schofield is no longer, as he was at one stage in her career, an "icon" she "worships". She attributes this mainly to her getting older and also to meeting him face-to-face a lot. So her lack of hero worship is not because Schofield has changed but because she has. She stresses:

> I don't really think what you see on the tv has changed from what we used to see back then, he's still the same, I mean admittedly you don't get it so much through the [ITV] programmes because there's not so much scope, but in an interview situation, when he is just being himself, essentially he's not [different] I wouldn't have said.

Rya too was asked whether her fan relationship with Schofield has changed. She says she has always admired his work, noting that even when he has been involved in a "dodgy" project, it has been the vehicle at fault not Schofield himself. She stresses he has always been very good at everything he has done. Clearly her level of admiration has not wavered. Crucially, she has always liked his personality too. This liking has stayed constant and she seems to suggest that this is because his personality has remained consistent. She says, "I think that's what makes it easy for me to talk to him because from when he was in the Broom Cupboard to now he's still the same person." Rya admits she has always thought he is good-looking and says that these feelings have also fluctuated very little. When asked specifically about fancying him, she said:

> I mean to a certain extent if you find someone quite attractive and you like their personality blah blah blah, then you could be said to be fancying them but, I never thought about it as that strongly.
>
> Catherine: Faint swoon sort of thing.
>
> Rya: Mmm. I mean he is very attractive and there are times when you just think, wow, he looks incredible in that outfit but, I never kind of saw it that way you know the whole kind of oooh swoony swoony swoony, I never saw it like that, I mean even now, you know, em. . . . To me it's not an issue, he's unobtainable, so

there's no point in even, I don't even go there [laughs], I don't even think about it that way because em, I'm very down-to-earth about things, I mean I know for a fact that he is unobtainable and even if, you know, you were stranded on a desert island with him you're still a fan, and there is this, I mean I know Anthea Turner and Peter Powell she was a fan of his blah be blah be blah, but.

Catherine: Because you can still fancy somebody even if you know they're unobtainable.

Rya: Yeah but to me it was just, em . . . to me it's just a case of you know you're wasting energy on this, you know like get a real perspective on things, he is really good and I really, he is really good looking, really attractive, I really like some of his clothes that he wears, some of his clothes are fantastic and he just looks great in them, but I wouldn't say in a real sense, you know, that I fancied him at all.

It could be suggested that one reason these fans have lasted so long (from their teenage years and through their twenties) is because their relationship with Schofield is not primarily about fancying him. It is, rather, based on admiration and a liking for his personality - these things have not changed or worn off as fancying might be prone to do.

Rya: I mean there were people, ah, we ended up getting talking to people at *Joseph* sometimes and, you know, you'd chat away and they'd find out you'd been to see it quite a lot and they'd go, oh so are you a fan of Phillip or are you a fan of the show, and we went oh really a fan of Phillip, and they'll go, d'you know he's married?, and, and you just think, *what?*, well dah yes, why do you think that since he got married now all my hopes and dreams are shattered and I'm not going to think about him anymore because he's off the market, you just think bloody hell, but that's what people think, people think that it's a whole kind of fancying thing cause for a lot of people it is. . . . [For them] it's like, oh no if he didn't marry her then he would definitely have married me, [sarcastically] please.

Asked about loyalty, Rya says that she has felt loyal to Schofield since he presented Children's BBC and that for her loyalty has always been a part of being a fan. It is important to her that she be there on significant occasions - such as the World Premier

of *Doctor Dolittle* - to show her support. She believes that Schofield appreciates the support he gets from his fans, that it means something to him, and is a positive thing for him.

It is often suggested that a media figure can act as a role model for their fans, and so these fans were asked about ways in which Schofield might have played this part in their lives. About seeing Schofield as a role model figure, Rya says:

> I did, because I enjoyed watching tv and radio stuff that he did, I was quite interested in it because I'd watched it so much and a lot of the stuff involves you seeing backstage behind the scenes, so I was quite interested so, but I so I did hospital radio and student tv, but I did it in the same way that someone would recommend a book to you and say this is really good, you know that kind of thing. But then I found that nah I couldn't be bothered with it so I didn't, but in that way kind of a role model but not really.

Rya continues:

> I just have a completely different life to him, I mean he'd grown up and wanted to be on tv all his life and he's done it and in a way that's, it's very admirable that he had goals and he achieved them and you know, "anyone from anywhere can make it if they get a lucky break," [laughs] that line [from *Joseph*], I mean, it's nice to think that that happens to people, and it's nice to see someone who is successful and who on the face of it does seem to have a good life, and it does make you think there are jobs that people like to do, there are you know, there is hope for people that you know, it's nice to see that someone enjoys their job, it's nice to see someone getting married, someone having kids, that kind of thing, that and, because a lot of the time you just see marriages breaking up and people pissed off with their jobs, getting treated like crap and not getting paid very well and all that kind of thing so that's, I mean that's not really a role model that's just, [pause] just a, I don't know, I don't know what that is.

This suggests that celebrities like Schofield can give ordinary people hope for a better life and provide reassurance that anyone (regardless of their background) can achieve their goals, happiness, and success.

It is worth noting that all the fans interviewed feel glad that they've seen Schofield become successful.

> Lindsay: Yeah I mean you never like to see, someone that you like, someone that you're into, someone that you admire, fail. And the fact that, touch wood and whistle, everything's gone so well for him, he has gone from strength to strength, and, on both his professional career has moved on in leaps and bounds, he also seems very happy in his personal life, which is great you never want to see anyone you give the slightest toss about have hardship or hard times anyway or be unhappy in any quarter.

Rya talks about feeling proud of Schofield. The strength of these feelings is particularly clear when she refers to his appearance on *This is Your Life*.

> I mean I'm happy for him because he deserves it [success] and I, it makes me happy that . . . someone who is a decent guy can have good things happen to him. . . . It makes me proud that he's earned it, and, that I saw in him when I was watching Children's BBC that he was great and I was proven right, because he is and you just feel, you just feel, yeah I was right and I'm justified because look at what he's doing, isn't this great, you know and you feel proud in a way that, you know, this is like [puts on accent] oh it's our Phillip, oh yes, you know, but I mean *This is Your Life* you just think, oh this is so great and this is yeah, you just feel so proud that all these people are saying all these nice things about him and that when they do loads of clips of his career they're all great, you know, they're all really funny and you know there's all these little bits and you just think, yeah that's something to be proud of and he's done it and isn't that great. . . . I mean the Newquay roadshow, that was just incredible, all these people turned out for him and you just feel so proud that, it's not the coolest thing to like someone who's so squeaky clean and all this kind of thing, but everyone just saw he, it's Phil, he's great, you know, whatever.

Her feelings for "our Phillip" are surely more akin to those of his family than those of the regular *This is Your Life* viewer or member of the crowd at the Newquay roadshow.

To return to the idea that Schofield might have been a role model for these fans, Lindsay does think this has been the case in her life. Of course, this influence need not necessarily be of a life-shaping sort: it might just be that fans take up parallel activities, as these fans have occasionally done. However their doing so was not a deliberate attempt to copy Schofield, but was, rather, simply due to his sparking an interest.

> Lindsay: I don't know whether it's, oh I'll do that because he's doing it, but like with anyone if they go on about something long enough and loud enough, and oh it's really really good and you think, what's, what do they see in it?, what's, why do they like it so much, and so you will go and have a look and do stuff and then it's entirely up to you whether you stick with it. It's like the whole Tad Williams thing, with the books, when he was going on and on and on . . . and here we are, the guy's on his next set of books, and we're all fighting over ourselves trying to get a copy, trying to get the latest edition, the latest book that's out, that's because of him [Schofield] . . . I mean there's no point in doing everything they do, you lose your own identity if you do that, just because you like the person, it's like, if you're at school becoming your best friend, doing everything that she does, and, you know, she does everything that you do. You can't be like that. But you can take pointers from people.

Lindsay describes certain songs and objects as "memory tools": what she means is that they serve as markers of a moment in her fan career, and thus are part of the shared history she has with Schofield.

The idea that fans copy their hero is something this group of fans joke about: they are aware that this discourse surrounds fandom. Abby and Samantha claim they have seen many fans copy Schofield, though they have never done so themselves. In fact they deliberately avoid doing so because it is such a "fan thing" to do.

> Samantha: There are a lot of things that we like that he likes, that you don't know he likes till you've got them and he says he likes them, and then people say you only had them cause you knew he liked them, oh that got you a bit of attention [from him] and that, and you think, you know, go away, I got these cause I like them, just cause he's happened to say.

She gives the Internet and the band *Then Jerico* as examples. Rya says something very similar:

> It's really annoying, I mean, you kind of get to the stage where you think bloody hell I can't say I like that now, or I can't watch that now, I'm not going to see that film whatever, because you just think, ach people are just going to think that's the only reason I do something or whatever. I mean the way I look at it is, em, I've always thought, I've always thought you know, if I knew Phillip I would get along with him and it turns out I kind of do [laughs], you know, I can talk to him quite easily and chat away and, you know, that kind of thing, and, I have similar tastes, I have similar tastes in music to him and that's one of the reasons why when all I could do was like listen to him on the radio or watch him on telly, it kept up my interest because the more you find out the more you think yeah, I like the same music.

When asked for any way in which Schofield has influenced her, Rya gave the following example as an indirect (albeit life-shaping) influence:

> I decided, em, after I spoke to him on the phone, that I wanted to do the roadshows, the north east of England, cause he said are you doing any are you going to any of the roadshows and I said well, I really want to but it's really difficult to get someone to go with me . . . I thought stuff it, I'm gonna do it, I'm gonna do it on my own, I don't care . . . and I had a brilliant time, but as well as, but the way that influenced me was, I'm really shy, and I, infamously shy according to my family, I don't like talking to people I don't know, like, you are away for a whole week [following the roadshow], you've got to do everything by yourself, you've got to fend for yourself, you've got to do the whole lot . . . I was in dormitories [in hostels] and all this kind of thing . . . but I made that decision, I thought, right I'm gonna do it, I'm sick of being shy, I am sick of not doing things that I want to do and this getting in the way, I'm gonna do it and I had a fantastic time. . . . I mean cause I was at university but I was still at home so, you know, I still hadn't left the nest, but I was away for a week and I really enjoyed it and I enjoyed fending for myself.

Rya's fandom provided her with the impetus to accomplish something that, as she goes on to reiterate, she feels has made her more positive, assertive, confident, and independent in the long-term. She explains:

> . . . I mean that's all come out of, if I hadn't been a fan of his I don't know if I would even have left Scotland now, except for going on holiday somewhere to with my parents to Spain or something. I would have a completely different life and a completely different perspective on life, so, it is a life changing thing but not in a strange mystical way, it's just a practical way, you know.

It also turned out that by going to the roadshows Rya met other Schofield fans, and her fandom became a social activity.

Summary Conclusion

In conclusion to this section it is important to stress that there is no typical fan experience. Regardless of the fact that the subject of their fandom is the same, the fan relationship each of these individuals has differs. The way an individual's fan career develops seems to be largely due to their own personality and situation, and these are very different people. However their experiences of fandom do also have much in common.[2]

The interviewees all suggest that involvement with and commitment to the personality are not precursors to fandom, but rather, having become a fan, commitment and a certain dedication may follow. All point out it is possible to be a fan purely out of interest and appreciation. It was decided that "importance" is a suitable word to use in relation to fandom - that is, the intensity of an individual's fandom reflects how

important and meaningful it is to them. Talking about fandom in terms of levels of importance is helpful when considering how, for some, these levels change over time. Describing yourself as a fan, and being defined by others in this way, seems significant in the establishment of a fan career.

In some cases the fan relationship is sustained through the setting and subsequent attainment of goals. These goals relate to becoming increasingly closer to the personality and it takes substantial effort and investment to achieve them. It would seem that a difference between the fan and the ordinary audience member is the level of emotional feeling the former has for the personality. However, as with intensity, it is important to note that the strength and the nature of this attachment varies between fans. These fans are predominantly interested in Schofield's professional life and his career; some are more concerned with his private life than others.

Moving on to consider other forms of interaction beyond the para-social that fans might have with a personality, it was discovered that writing fan letters is not something these fans do. Writing is not regarded as a way of having "real" contact. However meeting the personality face-to-face is important and their interpersonal interaction with Schofield is now an extremely significant part of their fan relationship. Getting to know him, and his getting to know you in return, is considered an important progression. Crucially, however, face-to-face interaction does not replace mediated quasi-interaction: their fan relationship is a combination of both existing concurrently.

The nature of the fan relationship these individuals have is primarily one of admiration. Both admiring Schofield's ability at what he does and liking his personality are central

to their fandom. This admiration and liking have remained constant - something which seems to be due to the fact that Schofield himself has been consistent. Loyalty also plays a part in their fandom; fancying him much less so. As the examples given demonstrate, Schofield has acted as a role model or influence in these fans' lives. However this is something they are cautious about admitting to because they are aware of the popular discourses surrounding fandom, which associate it with pathology. Indeed, this awareness on their part was obvious throughout the interviews.

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[1]Clearly there is a certain form of adolescent marketing at work here.

[2]Harris (1998b) points out that, "speaking of fans, even the same group of fans, as homogeneous is almost certainly incorrect" (p.49). She notes that whilst, due to the object of their fandom, members of the same group are probably distinct from other fans, they are both similar to and differentiated from each other. It has also been recognised that fans themselves dislike the tendency to generalisation as they want "to retain the individuality and specificity of every member" (Merrick, 1997, p.58).

CONCLUSION

Recognising that the mass media have extended modern social life by giving rise to new forms of interaction and new kinds of relationships, this thesis set out to investigate the mediated social experience offered by broadcasting. Broadcasting invites audiences to participate in para-social interaction and to enter into para-social relationships with presenters.

The broad aim of this study has been to examine the relations between broadcasters and audiences. More specifically, the focus has been on broadcasting's use of personality presenters and on audience members' experiences of this. This research project has provided a detailed case study of the media personality Phillip Schofield and a qualitative account of fans' relationships with him.

This thesis has explained that broadcasting uses personality presenters to capture and connect with viewers and listeners. The characteristics of the personality system broadcasting has developed to relate to audiences have been considered. Examining Phillip Schofield as part of broadcasting's personality system, its features have been demonstrated. The process of its consumption has been investigated through in-depth interviews with four fans. A synthesis of theory addressed in this thesis, its application to the case study, and the main findings from the empirical audience research is given below. Schofield has been shown to be consistent with the discourses of broadcasting's personality system and his fans to make the preferred reading of Schofield the text. This conclusion then proceeds to reflect on the autobiographical investments in this work before going on to address the significance of the death of Jill Dando which occurred at a late stage of the research of this thesis and offers an opportunity to test some of its conclusions in a comparative study.

A presenter's basic function is to provide a way for broadcasting organisations to relate to their audiences. The human representatives of the organisations, personality presenters carry out facework encounters (i.e., they re-embed disembedded social relations). As "friendly faces" they work to establish familiarity, trust, and intimacy. The mode of facework cultivated is tied to how broadcasters see themselves and their role. This has increasingly become "of the people" and is reflected in the rise of the ordinary presenter who strives to be "just like us" (i.e., his or her audience members).

Schofield's approach as a children's presenter has been linked to developments in children's presentation aimed at better relating to viewers. It has been explained that children's programming has become increasingly egalitarian. Boyish and youthful himself, Schofield related to his viewers by adopting the role of the older brother or friend. The interviewees confirmed that Schofield connected with members of his young audience. It has been noted that Schofield was seen to conduct himself with his viewers in the manner they themselves would behave with a group of friends. Given the rapport Schofield established, the interviewees reciprocated through para-social interaction.

It has been emphasised that broadcasting encourages audience members to engage in para-social interaction by presenting much of its content as interpersonal communication. Consumed in a domestic context, broadcasting addresses its audiences directly and personally in the ordinary voice of everyday life. The programmes that Schofield has presented throughout his career have provided the opportunity for him to implement such social dialogue. Particularly in the case of his live and unscripted BBC

broadcasts, Schofield's speech was informal, spontaneous, and relaxed in character. It is clear that the interviewees responded to his conversational style.

Another feature of broadcasting's personality system is that its presenters are encountered regularly and predictably thus becoming familiar and knowable. Schofield's appearances were indeed frequent and reliable. However answers given by the interviewees indicate that this was less significant than the theory suggests. It seems that regular encounters and familiarity are not essential precursors to a para-social relationship. Furthermore, it is not necessary that audience members feel involved with or believe they know a presenter for a mediated relationship of intimacy at a distance to be established.

Focus has been given to the fact that "being yourself" is a main requirement made of presenters by the industry. It has been pointed out that Schofield gives the impression he is complying with this notion. Indeed all those interviewed believe that Schofield is "being himself" - albeit in a professional, working capacity - in his programmes, that the personality he offers is his own, and that he is most certainly not putting on an act.

The idea of "being yourself" is linked to the importance of integrity in broadcasting's personality system. When audiences are encouraged to assume that a presenter such as Schofield is "being himself", a belief in his genuineness is vital to their accepting it. Evidence presented by journalists (investigating on the audience's behalf) suggests that Schofield is authentic. The interviewees' trust in Schofield's integrity is essential to their sustaining a relationship with him. It has been noted how crucial it was to the

subjects that on first meeting Schofield he was found to be exactly as he appeared to be on television.

According to the professional ideology outlined in this thesis, in addition to genuinely "being themselves", good presenters are natural. This idea is corroborated by the interview findings. Schofield was regarded as natural by the interviewees and his naturalness seen as one of his main strengths. They describe him as being "at home on TV" and insist that his performance was not conscious or deliberate.

Another important point to which attention has been given is the fact that presenters are better accepted when they seem to be ordinary, down-to-earth, and homely. The case study has underlined the centrality of ordinariness to Schofield's persona. It has shown that Schofield is presented and presents himself as being normal. He deals with the extraordinary elements of his life - such as fame, success, or sex symbol status - through modesty, stressing how ordinary he really is.

Broadcasting tries to give us presenters who are "one of us": representative and typical. Schofield maintains his down-to-earth persona by emphasising he is just like everyone else. He has related to the audiences of his recent ITV programmes, which have been mainstream family light-entertainment aimed at a broad and general market, through his role as the family man. This thesis has highlighted broadcasting's assumptions that family life is the norm and is shared by all. Familial references are seen as enhancing ordinariness and creating a sense of familiarity because family life is taken to be a reflection of the audiences' experiences. Schofield normalises himself by concentrating

on the family and the mundane aspects of life. Importantly, this is not regarded as a deliberate ploy on his part by the interviewees.

Broadcasting's personality system gives the impression of intimacy and accessibility. Foregrounding the private sphere from which personal disclosures are made, the important role of subsidiary forms of circulation in giving intimate access to personalities has been stressed. Schofield has always been made accessible through interviews and features in magazines and newspapers where the focus is often on his personal life. However it was discovered that, whilst some are more concerned with his private life than others, the interviewees are predominantly interested in Schofield's professional life and his career. Although the interviewees were aware of the limited way in which, as audience members, they could know Schofield through his shows, the consumption of subsidiary forms of circulation does not seem to have contributed to or enhanced their para-social relationship with him. Rather it was only regarded as useful for filling in factual gaps and deemed more relevant to the activity of collecting than "getting to know Schofield better".

This thesis has highlighted the relevance of genre for broadcasting's personality system and for Schofield's career. The conversational, informal, spontaneous approach that appealed to the interviewees is one that works best in unscripted programming. However there is clearly more to finding a presenter appealing than their style of presentation, and the interviewees stressed how much they liked Schofield's personality. Indeed liking Schofield's personality is central to their fandom. His sense of humour, in particular, is vital here. The fact that Schofield's personality and sense of humour apparently came across in his media appearances was also dependent on the genre he

was working in. On both television and radio, Schofield had lots of space to engage in chat, and, in so doing, to reveal his personality. The interviewees expressed disappointment at the scripted and thus restricting nature of Schofield's more recent series on ITV. It is felt that he is not given the chance to be himself on these programmes.

Acknowledging that the degree to which a persona's on-air personality is evident and the nature it takes vary according to programme type, this thesis has differentiated between types of presenter and the significance of personality for each. Schofield has been shown to possess the qualities of the pure personality category identified. The pure personality is the presenter who does not claim any special talent or expertise, but rather, making a virtue of their normality, apparently simply offers his or her own personality and is the audience's representative. These presenters are the people who, as surrogates, are the most like neighbours or kin. Given the space to "be themselves", their personality is central to the programmes they present.

It has been argued that the idea of presenting as oneself (albeit the televisual version of oneself) is widespread, covering programmes from most genres, but predominating in those characterised by chat. Here the presenters, who are communicators, have plenty of opportunity for conversation with others appearing on the programme and for direct address with the audience.

This thesis has also elaborated the idea that affinity will be felt for presenters most like the viewers and listeners themselves and therefore, related to channel and genre, certain

presenters appeal to and connect with certain audiences. Inevitably other audiences will find these presenters unbearable, rejecting them and their programmes.

Having highlighted the broadcasting industry's notion, with regard to its personalities, of "just being yourself" and given examples of presenters themselves formulating the idea, this thesis has asserted that the concept must be interrogated, pointing out that it is indeed constantly called into question throughout the media. It has been claimed that an awareness of the construction of personae has undermined broadcasting's traditional personality system where sincerity is crucial. Every celebrity has his or her persona, which is a public identity defined by elements from both the personality's professional and personal lives. Applying the concept of persona to the broadcasting personality, who claims not to have a constructed identity or an artificial image, casts doubt on their naturalness and integrity, thus challenging the sense of trust they work to achieve.

The case study looked in detail at Schofield's persona, which is produced and maintained in subsidiary forms of circulation. Based on his media appearances and his uncontroversial private life, this persona has always been "Mr Nice Guy". Having established himself as a children's presenter and related to the family genre he currently works in, Schofield's ordinariness is equated with being clean. He was described as the boy-next-door when a bachelor. Now in his thirties and married with children, he is presented to the public as the family man. This is an emphasis he has been shown to positively encourage. Schofield's safe persona has served him well throughout his career.

This thesis questioned whether awareness of the cultivation of personae and the performance of sincerity might affect audiences' perceptions of and responses to a personality presenter. Whilst the interviewees are conscious of such issues and generally mistrust media personalities, this suspicion has not altered their relationship with Schofield. They believe his claims that his image is outside his control because it was constructed for him by the press and that he has never set out to be anything other than himself. Their opinion that Schofield is natural and authentic is repeated throughout the interviews. The interviewees did demonstrate knowingness that Schofield may not be his "real" self on television but felt confident that he is presenting a true version of himself. Choosing a favourite presenter has been likened to choosing a close friend: one would not pick somebody who is obviously false. Furthermore, if it was suspected that a friend was someone other than the person they claimed to be, all trust and the friendship would be lost.

Personality presenters have been shown to serve several main functions for broadcasting organisations. It has been reiterated that their basic purpose is to provide a way for broadcasters to relate to audiences. It has also been made clear that presenters personalise broadcasting and help to personify the channel they appear on. They give their identity to the programmes they present, which are both distinguished and sold through them as a result. Presenters are therefore central to programme publicity and have an economic function. Assets in this marketplace, they provide a way for broadcasters to compete. Broadcasters seek to secure the most popular presenters in the expectation that they will attract viewers or listeners. This point has been illustrated by Schofield's lucrative move from the BBC to ITV and the key role he played in publicising his new programmes.

It is anticipated that presenters will remain a main criterion for viewers selecting a channel as the choice of channels widens. Therefore there is an economic imperative for broadcasting to maintain its personality system as a means of attracting audiences. The fact that presenters epitomise the values of the channel they appear on will become ever more salient because their identity will be crucial in defining that channel and what it stands for in the era of multiple channels.

This thesis has asserted that the industrialisation of the professional personality is an important part of the system and ought to be acknowledged as such. Making a career as a professional personality, nowadays radio and television presenters have to promote themselves and keep their profile high through media and personal appearances. It has been suggested that most presenters, moving beyond their own programmes into a range of texts, are intertextual and, entering extensively into subsidiary forms of circulation, are best thought of a "media personalities", with those who are well known achieving celebrity status. In the case study, Schofield's unprecedented intertextuality and his place within the commercial popular culture of young people have been elaborated. This market includes Saturday morning television, Radio 1, and teenage magazines.

It has been discovered that the interviewees give much consideration to the professional Schofield and his career as a personality. He is not only seen as a friendly face to relate to, but it is recognised that he is making professional media appearances and his performance is judged. It was very important to the interviewees that they thought Schofield was good at his job and worthy of admiration. Indeed admiring Schofield's ability has always been central to their fandom.

Operating as commodities in a competitive marketplace the careers of professional personalities are looked after by managers and agents. This thesis has argued that broadcasting's contemporary personality system cannot be fully understood without taking into account the part played by management companies and public perceptions of this. A primary concern here is that audience awareness of the management process potentially has serious implications for the credibility of broadcasting's personality system. In order to gain insight into how the management of personality presenters might be perceived, media discourse surrounding the management company employed by Schofield has been studied. Profiling James Grant Management, this thesis has looked at the reputation of the company and the role of the managers as presented to the public. Attention has been drawn to journalistic discussions about Peter Powell as a controlling, manipulating figure.

The interview findings confirm that members of a modern audience recognise the management process, but suggest that the part played by a management company is thought to vary, with managers seen as having little influence in the careers of those who have achieved the status of favourite presenters and great influence in the careers of those who have not. It has been pointed out that the interviewees all feel strongly that Schofield is not controlled by his management company and refuse to regard him as constructed or as a commodity. (Some personalities talk openly about themselves as commodities but Schofield does not.) However they acknowledged that their claims about Schofield do not apply to all personalities and it was concluded that perhaps his naturalness is atypical of presenters generally. The success of presenters judged by the interviewees to be manufactured and false - and talked about in these terms - was attributed to their managers.

In addition to investigating the subjects' responses to Schofield as a presenter (with particular focus on what it was about him that appealed to them), views on him as a professional personality, and their building a relationship with him, their fandom has also been explored. This research project has demonstrated that the intensive cultivation of a para-social relationship is the basis of one form of fandom.

Initiated by non-reciprocal intimacy at a distance, the interviewees' relationships with Schofield now operate on the levels of both mediated quasi-interaction and face-to-face interaction with both existing concurrently. Meeting Schofield in person was important for all the interviewees and the interpersonal relationships they have established with him now form a substantial part of their fan relationships. Getting to know him, and his getting to know them in return, was considered an important progression. It has been interesting to discover that in some cases the fan relationship has been sustained through the setting and subsequent attainment of goals, which related to becoming increasingly closer to Schofield and took substantial effort and investment to achieve.

It has been stressed in this thesis that there is no typical fan experience: indeed the interviewees' fan careers developed differently. The intensity of an individual's fandom reflects how important and meaningful it is to them and this level of significance can change over time. It would seem that a difference between the fan and the ordinary audience member is the level of emotional feeling the former has for the personality. However, as with intensity, it has been noted that the strength and nature of this attachment varies between fans. The interviewees suggest that, having become a fan, commitment and a certain dedication to a personality may follow, but that these are not precursors to fandom.

The essence of the fan relationships the interviewees have has been shown to be primarily of admiration and liking. They all share the fact that both admiring Schofield's ability at what he does and liking his personality are central to their fandom. Loyalty also has a part to play but romantic feelings much less so. These fans also have in common the fact that sociability is an important aspect of fandom for them. This study has traced the formation of the fan community they belong to and has emphasised the social dimension to being a fan.

Attention has been drawn to the fact that it is common for the work of those academics writing about fans to be rooted in and shaped by their own fandom. Being a fan of Phillip Schofield myself has advantaged my study immensely. One of the main benefits has been that, as a member of the fan community researched, I had privileged access to the subjects. Very detailed and intimate insight into the relationships these individuals have with Phillip Schofield has been gained due to my being an "insider".

These fans are aware of the social stigma surrounding fandom and the popular discourses associating it with pathology. During the interviews they made passing reference, in the form of jokes or silly voices, to the commonly held negative stereotypes of the fan as socially and psychologically lacking or deviant (i.e., the "sad anorak" character or the obsessed loner). Their own fandom is something they are usually reluctant to admit to and cautious about discussing because of concerns that they will be judged negatively. Given their mature age and Schofield's bland reputation, and based on previous experience, they realise that they are vulnerable to contempt and derision.

It is a potential problem that the subjects are being asked about a stigmatised, guarded, and, at times, embarrassing aspect of their lives. Their suspicion is that a researcher interested in them would be looking for abnormality - for what is wrong with them - and they would not have talked openly with an "outsider" or a non-fan. They could trust me as a researcher because I share their position. I was seen as "one of them" and included in references made in the interviews to a communal "we" and "us".

Despite the fact that they were assured of my sympathy, I was conscious that at times the interviewees were wary when giving answers to topics that they thought could be construed unfavourably. They were adamant about distinguishing between mediated interaction and "real" interaction and were initially unwilling to acknowledge knowing someone through the former: disturbed fans they have come across were unable to differentiate the mediated from the real and could be characterised by claiming to be closely acquainted with Schofield despite never having met him. The interviewees were also embarrassed about admitting to activities that are seen as stereotypical fan behaviours – such as having a media figure as a role model (examples given demonstrate that Schofield was an influence in their lives). However overall they chatted with me frankly.

My fandom was not only beneficial in gaining access to this community. I used my fan autobiography to help me prepare the interviews. The questions were based both on the theory and on my own fan history - the latter enabled me to open up discussion with the subjects. The interpretative analysis subsequently involved in the research also drew on my belonging to this group of fans. In fact the interpretation offered could be described as "first order" since I am a native (Geertz, 1973, p.15). Understanding their

expressions, I was able to explain what the interviewees meant, translating and summarising this in academic language. My fandom of Phillip Schofield was also fundamental to the case study produced. As an analyst, I had access to the abundant material I had conscientiously gathered over a twelve-year period as a fan.

The case study's narrow base allowed for an in-depth examination but it is not thought to be limiting because this thesis does not only tell us about Phillip Schofield. Schofield has been shown to be an exemplar of the pure personality presenter and the persona type labelled the boy-next-door (or the family man) and known for being nice. He is representative or typical of mainstream presenters and can be seen to have much in common with personalities such as Terry Wogan, Des Lynam, Michael Parkinson, Gaby Roslin, Carol Smillie, and - as expounded below - the late Jill Dando. Furthermore the fact that, like the fans of Schofield researched, many people relate to a personality presenter, form a meaningful bond with them, and feel that person has a place in their own life, is a normal part of the consumption of broadcasting. That this is a contemporary social and cultural phenomenon is illustrated by the sense of loss experienced when presenters retire or die.

During the writing up of this thesis, television presenter Jill Dando died after being shot in the head outside her west London home. This incident, which took place on Monday 26th April 1999, was of some national significance, as reflected in the strength of the public reaction and the extent of the media coverage. This thesis will conclude by considering the event's relevance to this study. The main conclusions reached in this research project may facilitate an understanding of both the public response to Dando's death and the way in which she was talked and written about in the media. As the

following discussion demonstrates, whilst they are not synonymous, Dando and Schofield have much in common as pure personality presenters and they share a persona type. Although their careers are not alike (e.g., Schofield's background is in popular culture, Dando's in journalism), the similarities between them are more significant than the differences, and the arguments made in this thesis with regard to Schofield can be applied equally well to Dando. Indeed much of this thesis is tested and borne out by what is said about Dando: as it would have been had any one of a number of personality presenters died.

As a high profile BBC presenter, Dando was a public face of the corporation. She was one of those who personified the channel, her persona epitomising the BBC's own identity. In a piece for *The Guardian* entitled "The friendly face of the BBC", Kamal Ahmed (1999, April 27) points out that Dando was a "convenient shorthand" in the BBC's attempts to define itself, and he writes:

> Cilla Black not only works for ITV, she is ITV. Graham Norton is becoming Channel 4. Desmond Lynam is BBC1. Miss Dando was becoming his equal. . . . Accessible, everybody's friend, a communicator who put the viewer at their ease - you could be talking about Miss Dando or what the BBC would like to be itself.

It is interesting to note that Lynam and Dando had reportedly been chosen to host the BBC's millennium show (Appleyard, 1999, May 2). In the light of the argument made about personality presenters operating as commodities in the competitive world of broadcasting, it should be pointed out that since Ahmed's time of writing, Lynam has been bought by ITV. His four-year contract with the commercial channel is reportedly

worth up to £5 million and the deal is thought to include a £750,000 "transfer fee" (Carroll, 1999, August 3): thus proving Lynam's worth as an asset in this marketplace.

Ahmed quotes Dando's colleague Martyn Lewis as commenting, "She was the face of BBC1. Look at the promotion the BBC gave her, the amount of times they used her to make generic adverts. They knew that she was the bridge to the people" (1999, April 27). Elsewhere, BBC newsreader Jennie Bond is quoted as saying, "Jill really was the face of the BBC, the modern BBC, because she was so approachable, so pleasant and somebody who was very nice to have in your drawing room" (Moore & Parker, 1999, April 27).

Dando was a "bridge to the people" because she was accepted as one of the people. Comparing her to Princess Diana, the *Daily Record* newspaper went so far as to claim, "Diana was the People's Princess. Jill was the People's Presenter" ("Echoes of Diana," 1999, April 27). Dando provided a way for the BBC to connect with viewers. Her ability to do this so successfully is attributed to her girl-next-door persona. She was described as "the girl-next-door" throughout the extensive media coverage following her murder. As has been shown with Schofield, this is a persona that serves mainstream presenters well. The *Daily Mail*'s front-page headline on 27th April declared "Death of the girl next door". The paper's editorial commented, "Jill Dando was the nation's favourite 'girl next door'. That is why her death leaves so many mourning today" ("Comment," 1999, April 27). The *Daily Record* also described her as "the nation's favourite girl next door" ("We all loved her," 1999, April 27). Writing in *The Express*, Jane Warren (1999, April 27) recognised Dando's "girl-next-door appeal".

As would be expected from this thesis's conclusions, central to this girl-next-door appeal was the fact that Dando was perceived as ordinary and down-to-earth. The front page of *The Independent* referred to the extraordinary killing of an 'ordinary' TV star and described Dando as a presenter "whose immense popularity was based on her down-to-earth appeal" (Buncombe & Judd, 1999, April 27). The *Daily Mail* presented a double page photographic tribute to Dando headlined "Extraordinary life of an ordinary girl" (Evans & Gannaway, 1999, April 27). *Sun* columnist Jane Moore argued that being ordinary was Dando's charm. She says that Dando:

> never behaved like a 'star' and there was always something very approachable and open about her. She was everyone's sister, aunt, niece, or daughter. . . . Everyone could relate to her because she seemed so down to earth in a business that spawns more than its fair share of prima donnas. . . . She was always slightly embarrassed by her widespread appeal, and particularly by her ever-growing male fan club. . . . The overall memory of Jill Dando is that she was just like the majority of people in this country. (Moore, 1999, April 27)

Writing about Dando's appearances in magazine and newspaper interviews, Ahmed states that:

> what comes over is screaming normality. I'm like you, she says. I may be famous, I may earn close to £1m a year, but if I met you I'd talk to you and laugh and smile and be exactly the same. (1999, April 27)

Elsewhere she herself is cited as having said:

> I'm a very ordinary person. I am still surprised when people come up to me in the street and put me on a pedestal. I don't see myself other than I have always been. It's nice to think that people see me as a mate. (Kay, 1999, April 27; Marks, 1999, April 27)

Dando's will to ordinariness is clear. Her modesty and slight embarrassment at her fame is part of this. It is claimed she saw herself as "ordinary but lucky" (Levy, 1999, April 27). Lester Middlehurst quotes her as having said, "It's just been a case of being in the right place at the same time. I sometimes wake up in the morning, look in the mirror and think why me?" (1999, April 27). Again in words that echo Schofield, she added that she was very aware her success could all end tomorrow. Middlehurst himself claims, "That is why Jill was so popular. She wasn't any different from anybody else, but more importantly, she knew she wasn't" (ibid.). He notes that when she topped popularity polls she treated it with modesty and humour. In 1997 Dando and Des Lynam were voted the two people those surveyed would most like to have as neighbours. Dando topped another poll as the companion most people would choose to go on holiday with ("Obituaries," 1999, April 27).

Dando's down-to-earth character was widely acknowledged. On the BBC's *Nine O'clock News* it was said that, "although her career fulfilled a dream it never lifted her feet from the ground" (1999, April 26). *Newsnight* also noted her ability to be a star but not to change a bit (1999, April 26). According to its editorial, Sir John Birt told *The Sun* that Dando was unaffected by her fame and that she never let it change her. The paper claims, "That was why she was so popular with the entire country" ("The Sun says," 1999, April 27).

As this thesis has suggested is typical for those labelled the boy or girl-next-door, Dando was characterised as nice and her image was wholesome. Writing for *The Independent*, Kathy Marks said:

> The word "nice", which went out of fashion long ago, was on everyone's lips as friends and colleagues struggled to come to terms with her death. Ms Dando was nice, she was ordinary, she was extremely likeable. She was, as her brother once put it, "an all-round good egg". (1999, April 27)

The Daily Telegraph's editorial commented, "In a medium that frequently projects characters that are extreme, self-regarding, violent or rude, she seemed to be amiable, normal, kind" ("The murder of Jill Dando," 1999, April 27). It is interesting that Cliff Richard was the star Dando herself always admired.

Dando was attractive and "sexy" in an unthreatening way. As recognised by Bryan Appleyard, "She was sexy, but in a way that reinforced rather than challenged the social and familial order" (1999, May 2). Infamously, the week she died Dando appeared on the front cover of the *Radio Times* posing in a black leather catsuit. This was unusually overtly sexual. However, as is also typical for this persona type, critics found her unconvincing as a "Bad Girl" (Burchill, 1999, April 28). Gordon Burn notes the dissonance between this image and the "homely, wholesome, entirely unremarkable figure" paid tribute to by the people who knew her (1999, April 28). In an article in *The Sun* headed "Family she adored", Chris Pharo describes Dando as "a home-loving girl who adored her family" (1999, April 27). Dando spoke of her desire to marry and have children and was delighted to have recently become engaged. As has been shown to be characteristic of this type of personality presenter, talk of family life enhances her homeliness.

Again like Schofield, Dando was aware that her "nice" persona did not make her popular with everyone and readily admitted that some people found her girl-next-door

demeanour "a complete turn-off" (Middlehurst, 1999, April 27). In their obituary, *The Daily Telegraph* acknowledged that:

> Inevitably, her wholesome image stuck in the throats of cynics who dubbed her "Jill Blando" and reassured themselves that she lacked intellectual ballast. In fact, Jill Dando was wise enough to realise that it was her seeming ordinariness and her girl-next-door attractiveness which lay at the heart of her popularity. ("Obituaries," 1999, April 27)

Projecting her "own" personality was one of the factors that made her vulnerable to public taste.

This thesis has claimed that pure personality presenters - like Dando or Schofield - are the surrogate of their potential audience members and the most like neighbours, kin, or friends. Dando's talent has been recognised as "being able to put the viewer at his or her ease" (Ahmed, 1999, April 27) and "to make people feel as if she was a friend" ("A dangerous talent," 1999, April 27). Both were achieved because of her main skill as a pure personality - the ability to seemingly "simply be herself". Or at least to present a televisual version of herself that was an apparently credible reflection of her real self. As would be expected from the argument made in this thesis, it was vital to Dando's success that she was regarded as authentic. In paying tribute, her colleagues and friends did indeed highlight her integrity and sincerity: as illustrated in the extracts below.

Furthermore, another of the key words highlighted in this thesis's discussion of the professional ideology behind television presentation - "natural" - was used to describe her. In relation to her naturalness, it is worth noting that, according to the often repeated biographical detail surrounding Dando, she had always had an interest in the media and,

as a schoolgirl, wrote to Jimmy Savile asking him to fix it for her to appear on television (e.g., Calder, 1999, April 27).

Sir John Birt, BBC Director-General, said, "What you saw was what you got with Jill. Her public and private persona were one and the same thing. Her warmth wasn't feigned, it was real" (*Nine O'clock News*, 1999, April 26). Dando's co-presenter on *Crimewatch*, Nick Ross, claimed Dando was "brimming with integrity" and had "a smile that was sincerity itself" (Ross, 1999, April 27). He went on to write, "Everyone's grief is utterly sincere. Perhaps that's the greatest tribute to Jill Dando" (ibid.). John Humphrys said:

> It is the oldest cliché in the book, but what you saw on screen is what you got off screen. . . . She was able to sit in front of the camera and be herself. I think that is why people liked her so much. ("It was a joy," 1999, April 27)

Elsewhere he is quoted as commenting, "She was an entirely natural person, just a completely normal unaffected person and viewers spotted that" (Davison, 1999, April 27). A friend and colleague of Dando, Jennie Bond's tribute included her saying, "She was such a natural. On and off screen she didn't change" (Callan, 1999, April 27). Another colleague, Nicholas Witchell, stated:

> She was such a genuinely nice person. The person you saw on screen was the same as the person off screen. That lack of affectation came through and was part of the reason for her success. She brought energy, enthusiasm, warmth and sincerity to her work. (McColm, 1999, April 27)

He goes on to describe her as a down-to-earth person. Her former editor Bob Wheaton noted, "She was a natural, a joy to watch" (Seamark & Rose, 1999, April 27).

Presenting the BBC's special tribute programme, Des Lynam remarked, "Her audience instinctively understood that she was sincere, had no airs or graces, and a tremendous ability to connect with people at all levels" (*Tribute to Jill Dando*, 1999, April 26). On BBC2's *Newsnight* programme it was recognised that there was nothing false about Dando (1999, April 26). Commenting for the *Daily Record*, BBC newsreader Sally Magnusson claimed:

> Her celebrity status was something she dealt with modestly and unassumingly. That was one of the keys to her success. She never let it go to her head and was always very down to earth. In fact, most people who met her would tell you how sincere she really was. (Magnusson, 1999, April 27)

TV presenter Fred Dineage stated, "Jill was such a beautiful, modest girl. She appealed to people because she appeared to be a nice, ordinary girl - and that is exactly what she was" (Yates & Darvill, 1999, April 27). Indeed Dando's brother said, "The open, friendly, approachable personality who appeared on our TV screens was no act. Jill was like that away from the cameras too - a warm human being who loved her work and her family" (Steele, Tweedie, & Graves, 1999, April 27).

This thesis has pointed to the fact that presenters' claims about their sincerity are interrogated by journalists and may be challenged by audiences: a justifiable response when management and PR companies are so involved in the careers of professional personalities. Although the possibility of a manufactured image or constructed persona was raised in journalists' discussions of Dando, her reputation was not challenged. Kathy Marks wrote in *The Independent*:

> Ms Dando was one of television's most successful and best-paid personalities, but she came across as down-to-earth. She was famous yet ordinary; attractive but not glamorous; clever without being an intellectual. And all this is not an artificially cultivated image, according to those who knew her well. It was, and remained, the real Jill. (1999, April 27)

Attempting to give an explanation for her appeal, Bryan Appleyard argued in *The Sunday Times*:

> Her friendly, attractive on-screen image was not the usual adopted persona, it was the real Dando. This made her unthreatening; we did not feel that something sinister was being hidden. What we saw was what we got - a consoling thought in a media world in which seeing seldom leads to getting. (1999, May 2)

In a feature in *The Guardian*, Gordon Burn (1999, April 28) refers to the fact that Dando was an "un-pushy media presence" and uses the word "unpackaged" in relation to her: thus implying she was not visibly marketed.

This research project's findings show that an awareness of the cultivation and marketing of media personae does affect viewers' consumption of broadcasting personalities: those judged to be fake or false are rejected and disliked. However people's favourite presenters are not regarded sceptically in these terms but are perceived of as genuine and unmanufactured. The research reported demonstrates that audience members accept presenters are "professionals" and understand that they are not being themselves completely on screen. However for a para-social relationship to be established, viewers do need to believe that what they see on television is a *version* of that person - a version not far removed from (or untrue to) the real person. Furthermore, it is crucial that the personality the presenter offers is seen to be their own. Only when a presenter is

regarded as sincere and genuine do they inspire trust. Dando once said that she thought people would trust her with their key if they went away (Marks, 1999, April 27). As this study's findings indicate, because it is like a friendship, trust is an essential part of a para-social relationship.

This thesis has argued that the genre of programming a presenter appears in is crucial. Indeed, the significance of programme genre in Dando's career must be stressed. Dando's background was in journalism and she made her debut on national television in 1988 as a newsreader on *BBC Breakfast Time*. In 1994 she began to read the BBC's *Six O'clock News*. Alongside her role as a newsreader, Dando was a presenter on *Crimewatch UK* and *Holiday*: demonstrating a professional versatility. Although she became a familiar figure through all three, it was on *Holiday* that she addressed her audience most conversationally in the ordinary voice of everyday life. It was through this programme that Dando became a personality, established her persona as knowable, and endeared herself to her audience. That viewers were able to "come to know her" through her appearances on *Holiday*, was due to the space the show gave her to "chat", to reveal her personality, to be (a televisual version of) herself. Dando is described as friendly, open, approachable, and likeable because on *Holiday* she had the opportunity to appear so.

Dando's work on the programme provided the *Daily Mail* with a photograph of her on a beach wearing a swimming costume and sarong to accompany its front-page girl-next-door headline, for instance. Paying tribute in their news report, the BBC recognised that on *Holiday* "the gorgeous girl-next-door" was "freed from the straight-jacket of news" and claimed this is the programme she will be remembered for (*Nine O'clock News*,

1999, April 26). It is significant that the special tribute programme that followed the *Nine O'clock News* consisted predominantly of clips from *Holiday*.

It looked like Dando was set to continue her career successfully outside the genre of news. She had been tipped to anchor the BBC's revamped *Six O'clock News*. According to the *Radio Times*, research had shown that "the public considered some of her colleagues too 'snooty' or 'aloof', but Ms Dando was the job" ("Everybody's talking about," 1998, October 10-16). However she reportedly ruled herself out when discussions about the appointment became acrimonious. It was felt by some at the BBC that she did not have sufficient gravitas (Ahmed, 1999, April 27). The first edition in Dando's new series, *Antiques Inspectors*, was screened just the day before her death. Like *Holiday*, this could be described as a "factual entertainment" programme. Interacting with antiques experts - but not knowledgeable herself - and chatting with members of the public, Dando was clearly the target audience's representative.

The way in which Dando died was so brutal and shocking that this no doubt heightening the strength of feeling: tributes were led by the Queen, the Prime Minister, and the Home Secretary. However, regardless of the fact that she died in such a vicious way, her death had an impact on people who had never met her but through television felt they knew her and believed she meant something to them. The BBC's *Nine O'clock News* opened with the assertion, "Jill Dando, known and loved by millions . . . " (1999, April 26). During the programme Michael Buerk reported her death as, "A terrible shock for you and me who knew her". Of course, he knew her personally and viewers knew her para-socially, but that fact did not seem to matter.

Unsurprisingly, much was made by the press of the fact that Dando had previously been stalked by an infatuated admirer. She was pestered by a retired civil servant from Kent until the BBC warned him that his actions constituted harassment (Pook, 1999, April 27). Having reviewed the existing literature on the mediated relationships of intimacy at a distance that develop between presenters and their audiences, this thesis supports claims that, whilst such cases of extreme para-sociability do exist, it is usual for people to enter into para-social relationships with presenters. This is a legitimate and even inevitable response from audience members to the simulation of interpersonal interaction, which is an invitation to reciprocate socially. It was concluded that para-social interaction is a normal - not an abnormal - part of the consumption of broadcasting and a common experience.

Indeed, condolences from thousands of people who held Dando in affection poured into the BBC. It was reported that at one stage on the day she died the BBC website was receiving a tribute every second (*Newsnight*, 1999, April 26). By the next day 9000 e-mail messages of sympathy had been sent (*Six O'clock News*, 1999, April 27). In a letter to the *Radio Times*, Sir John Birt thanked everyone for their kind thoughts and stated, "As all of your messages made clear, she will be greatly missed" ("Letters(f)," 1999, June 12-18).

Of course, many people did not feel like this: as is reflected in Bel Littlejohn's (1999, April 30) positive reply to letters printed in *The Guardian* calling for the grief surrounding the death of someone who was just a television presenter to be brought into perspective. Nonetheless, some people did seem genuinely (i.e., not just because the

media told them they ought to be) moved and saddened by the loss of Dando. The following extracts are taken from letters to the *Radio Times*:

> Jill Dando was the most naturally gifted presenter I have ever seen on television, so versatile and warm that people who only knew her from watching her thought they had a close friend visiting their living rooms. . . . I always felt she was regarding all who watched as a personal friend. . . . I have watched every programme she hosted over the years - she felt like a friend, someone you trusted and a warm, ego-less lady. . . . I found myself unable to work effectively after hearing the terrible news of Jill Dando's murder. . . . She was one of my favourite presenters and I shall miss her bright presence on our screens. . . . I just had to let you know how deeply shocked I was to hear the news of the death of Jill Dando. I have been an admirer of her work with the BBC for a long time. To me she exemplified all that is great about the BBC . . . ("Letters(e)," 1999, May 8-14)

As corresponds with the sentiments expressed by Schofield's fans, these viewers responded to Dando as a person and as a professional.

The public reaction to Dando's death was such that it was likened to that following Princess Diana's fatal accident nineteen months previously. Clearly people have feelings characteristic of interpersonal relationships for all sorts of familiar public figures - members of the royal family, political leaders, fictional characters, pop stars - to the extent that they can experience grief when these individuals die. This is a modern occurrence in so far as the media - and broadcasting in particular - give us intimate access to these public figures as real people. This thesis has concentrated solely on one form of mediated social relationship: that established between broadcasting presenters and their audiences through para-social interaction. Therefore, whilst the broad theoretical framework here may go some way in illuminating the general phenomenon, this work explains para-social relationships only and should not be generalised beyond

this. Para-social interaction is founded on broadcasters' use of direct, familiar, and personal forms of address that promote sociable reciprocation.

Through direct address and presentation styles resembling interpersonal communication, broadcasting has facilitated para-social interaction since it developed these modes. However it was with the rise of the personality presenter that this engagement was positively encouraged. This thesis has argued that affinity is most strongly felt for the pure personality type of presenter and suggests that they invite especially intensified para-social relationships because they are most like family and friends. Pure personality presenters have proliferated over the past twenty years with the growth of breakfast and daytime television and the increasingly informal and conversational nature of programming generally. Differentiating between personality type, stressing that genre is crucial to the potential for para-social interaction, and concentrating on pure personality presenters, this work represents an advance on current ways of thinking about para-social relationships, and by providing insightful qualitative research into fans' relationships with a media personality, has an original contribution to make to this field.

It seems that the study of mediated social experience in modernity is extremely interesting and a feature of this that is now found intriguing is the nature of broadcasting's pseudo-communities in which the part played by presenters is absolutely crucial. In modern culture, most people participate in the pseudo-communities broadcasting creates. However despite the fact that it is brought about through technology, this new form of mediated community seems largely rooted to traditional values. Perhaps most obviously, mainstream programming remains committed to an

ideology of family life that does not reflect the experience of the majority of the population, but also to an ideology of neighbourliness.

Recently broadcasting has been drawing on a traditional notion of neighbourliness. This is reflected in the trend since the 1980s for the type of pure personality presenter whose persona is one of "neighbourly niceness". These presenters are people members of the audience can not only imagine living next door to, but can think of as "ideal" neighbours: trustworthy, responsible, respectable, honest, reliable, kind, uncontroversial, uncomplicated, unthreatening. It has been noted that both Schofield and Dando have inspired audience members' trust.

Dando was a familiar, friendly, and safe presence in a pseudo-neighbourhood whose members felt they knew her. Indeed they may have felt they knew her better than they do many of their actual neighbours and so Dando's death is horrifying and disturbing. People expressed disbelief that someone so ordinary and decent could be the victim of such a terrible crime. The fact that she was her audience's representative - "one of us" - helps to explain her murder's impact on the public who responded as if this was a local tragedy. A symbol of ideal neighbourliness in broadcasting's pseudo-community, the fact that Jill Dando was killed on her front doorstep makes her death particularly shocking and poignant.

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